AN EARLY GOOSE **by C. W. Miller**

The SHOOTING TIMES

and Country Magazine

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SEVENTY-FIFTH YEAR FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15th, 1957 1s. 3d. WEEKLY

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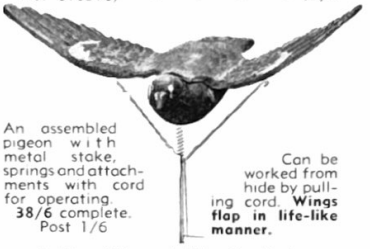

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WATER ABSTRACTION

WATER abstraction's widespread dangers were focused at the Salmon and Trout Association Conference held at Fishmongers' Hall.

Honours were divided in the choice of principal speakers. The Duke of Devonshire put forward the opinions of fishermen on the shortcomings of Government water policy, or lack of it, and urged some constructive recommendations which should be placed before the officials in Whitehall. Mr. A. N. Hickley, also a keen fisherman, described the plight of one Scottish salmon river, the Carron, due to bleeding the freshwaters for a hydro-electric scheme. The other two papers were given by experts of the water industry; Mr. Leonard Millis, Secretary of the British Waterworks Association, who spoke on underground abstraction, and Mr. S. G. Barrett, Engineer to the Newcastle and Gateshead Water Co., who dealt with overground abstraction. These latter speakers, perhaps naturally, were inclined to place the claims of angling far down on the list of water users, but both had some constructive suggestions for conservation measures.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the Conference as a whole was the general feeling voiced from the body of the hall that the problem is one which must be dealt with by discussion and co-operation among all interests concerned. Economics are an essential factor in any national water policy, but the expediency of the moment is not always the most economic policy for the future. Natural, healthy rivers with a good flow of water are vital not only to the fisherman, farmer, sportsman and countryman in general, but they are a capital asset of industry, water supply, tourism and many other commercial facets of the nation's life.

Most of those who have suffered already through excessive water abstraction in their own area are ready to fight authority in some form over the damage; are they also ready to do some constructive negotiation? Exhilarating as a fight may be, there are times where co-operation can be more rewarding. The atmosphere at the Salmon and Trout Association Conference suggests that the present may be such a time. It was encouraging to find representatives of game fisheries, coarse fisheries, water authorities and River Boards meeting on this problem which affects them all, and if they did not always agree on the order of precedence, they did on the need for a united effort.

Lord Hollenden, as President of the Association, promised that they would put forward certain recommendations to the Ministries concerned and also try to arrange discussions between the Salmon and Trout Association, River Boards and the water industry on mutual problems. It will be interesting to know in due course whether such discussions will establish a basis of common ground on which a sound national water policy could be built. Such a policy would stand a very much better chance of Government adoption if it possessed the support of all branches of water users.

In the meantime there is much that can be done in this, as in any other campaign, by informed public opinion. Some interests will attempt to dismiss the dangers of water abstraction as of moment only to a few fishermen. They are wrong. This is not merely or even primarily a menace to angling, but a menace to rivers, with the much wider significance which that implies.

THE SHOOTING TIMES
AND
COUNTRY MAGAZINE
Incorporating FIELD SPORTS

Official Organ of
THE WILDFOWLERS' ASSOCIATION
OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

No. 3923 FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1957 Founded 1882

The wild life of today is not ours to dispose of as we please. We have it in trust. We must account for it to those who come after.—King George VI.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Game Fair

Under the auspices of the Country Landowners' Association, for the first time in this country a Game Fair will be held on July 25 and 26 next year at the Hall Farm, Stetchworth, near Newmarket, on the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Ellesmere's Stetchworth Park Estate.

The idea is to bring together all those interested in game and shooting in East Anglia, and it is intended that there shall be demonstrations and films of modern game management; experts to give advice on particular shooting problems; trade stands exhibiting products concerning game and shooting; and competitions in clay pigeon shooting, small-bore rifle shooting and dog handling.

The Fair is to be, in essence, a demonstration of modern game management, in order to promote the idea—particularly amongst owner-occupiers of agricultural land—that game should be considered a farm crop.

World Shooting Championships

News concerning the 37th World Shooting Championships to be held in Moscow next year, comes from the Secretary General of the International Shooting Union.

Upon request, the Shooting Section of the U.S.S.R. has informed the Union that the competitions will be held at the Dynamo shooting ranges near Moscow at the end of August. The installations on the ranges were ready at the end of October this year and were then inspected by two delegates of the I.S.U.

In addition to the compulsory World Championship competitions there will also be, as usual, competitions for badges in several events. The shooters will probably be lodged in the neighbourhood of the shooting range. Up to 25 competitors or delegates from each country will be accommodated free of charge.

More details are expected in about two months.

More Small-Bore Interest

I hear from Mr. A. J. Palmer, N.S.R.A. secretary, that the National Small-bore Rifle Association is entering into its fifty-seventh year of activity with more affiliated clubs and more members than ever before.

From the fifty-eight County Associations and the 120 local leagues and associations comes news that they have more teams than ever competing.

A full programme of competitions promoted by the National Association has attracted record entries. In the short range league for teams of five there are 849 teams competing, and there are 260 works teams competing in a special industrial league. Almost 150 teams will be firing in the pistol league and 99 teams will shoot, standing and kneeling, on Olympic Games type of targets.

There are 3,764 contenders for the British Short Range Championship and several supplementary titles for women, juniors, Welshmen, Northern Irish and others. The Scotsmen have their own short range championship, for which entries are also better than ever before.

Electronic Calls

I see that, as predicted, the use of electrical devices or recordings in taking migratory game birds is prohibited during the 1957-58 American shooting season.

The standard penalties for the illegal taking of migratory game birds will now apply to the taking of such birds "by the use or aid of recorded bird calls or sounds or recorded or amplified imitations of bird calls or sounds." These penalties are a maximum of six months in jail, a maximum fine of $500, or both.

It appears that some makers of hi-fi record players, far from behing dismayed at the wildfowling ban imposed on their instruments have turned this legislation to good account. One firm stresses in an advertisement that so effective is their machine that the Government has ruled it illegal, but reminds customers that it is equally efficient for luring predators within close range. All that is required is a change of record.

Church Mice

According to a recent edition of my evening paper, field mice (surely they must have been church mice?) have been attacking the organ of All Saints Church, Goulceby, Lincs., and for some strange reason known only to mousy gourmets, have confined their attention to the black notes. Amongst those "baffled" by this departure from a normal diet of surplices and candles, is the rector, who in this matter at least, is unable to distinguish black from white.

I recall that considerable embarrassment was once caused in my school chapel by a grey squirrel, which devoured four of the ten Commandments shortly before the head boy was due to read the lesson. And I am reminded also, of a certain vicar in an Essex parish who fashioned himself a flail of boot-laces with which to drive from his church the bats that were causing so much distraction amongst his choir boys.

AUCEPS.

Canadas afloat in a channel with young. A flock of a hundred and more may be on a marsh and yet invisible, even through a telescope.

CONCERNING CANADAS

by Tower-Bird

SPECULATION, when Canada geese are seen in the neighbourhood where their presence is rare, or comparatively so, is general — and not infrequently runs riot. From time to time I have taken a passing interest in these birds (and shot the odd one) in a number of counties, but only during the past three weeks have I made a fairly close study of two distinct "flocks" ("Hard weather coming with the geese," say the locals, although the birds come from a park a few miles away). It seems that many inland shootmen and coastal, or near-coastal wildfowlers have a very vague idea about these great birds, and some seem doubtful whether they can legally shoot them.

The Canada goose was introduced into this country more than two hundred years ago, and, until comparatively recently, was denied a place on the British List. But since it is free-living, and, in this respect may well be compared with the re-introduced capercaillie, the pheasant, and the little owl, it is now recognised as British, and as a wild bird that may be shot. Moreover, it is something of a wanderer, and one which I shot recently carried a ring on its leg which proved that it had been ringed as a young one fifteen months earlier by The Wildfowl Trust and released from the Holland Arms, near Llangefni (Anglesey). The distance from this point to where I shot it in West Sussex is two hundred and twenty-five miles as the goose flies. It weighed 10½lb. and was delicious. The heavies I have shot this season weighed 14½lb., and, possibly because the weather was muggy and the bird could not be hung long enough, my fowling partner, to whom I presented it as a mark of esteem (!), found it a little on the tough side, though he was out and about again within a few days!

Consumers of Wigeon Feed

Now, as older readers know, I am not enormously struck with goose shooting, and would rather enjoy a good wigeon flight any day. But when I saw a "local" lot of Canadas, whose "home" is some five miles away, feeding every day—there were twenty-four of them—on a spot particularly favoured by our hosts of winter wigeon, I guessed they were using up the tender green grass, on which the duck "graze" and exist, far too rapidly. Accordingly, after a couple of evenings of observation, I knocked down a right and left. Two days later, to my utter horror, when the twenty-two great birds came gobbling and honking off the same feeding ground at dusk, becoming silent as they formed up into an oblique line and rose steeply before reaching the river, my ears could hardly believe what they heard as another lot left the ground with a terrific din, and I counted (approximately) one hundred and seventy-odd. These formed up into V formation and followed after the smaller lot.

An Impressive Sight

The following evening, waiting on the large lot, I was disappointed when they took off into the wind, and, seeing some anglers along the bank of the river, turned from their former flight line, rose steeply, and streamed away, sweeping, a cronking - cranking - bugle - noted wild V, round the grey sky until they were heading towards their former roost. But the smaller lot stayed for another twenty minutes, by which time the anglers were tramping homewards, and I took two more out of their ranks. To watch a long line of enormous birds coming straight towards one in the most perfect formation is a most impressive sight, and it is impressive to see them fall, especially if they are well up, but I must say that I got little satisfaction from the shooting itself, except perhaps when I killed my first right and left after someone had fired three shots at the geese and they were in a great hurry and climbing fast. I repeat that I get far and away more satisfaction in making a right and left at wigeon, mallard, or teal.

Now, I have just learned where the big "flock" came from—from Knepp Castle in Sussex, and the cause of their visit to us was that the lake at Knepp Castle had been drained, and the fish taken to be released in the Arun and elsewhere. So it seems that, while their club was being redecorated, as it were, the Knepp geese paid a visit to those of the other estate, using *their* roost and *their* flight line and *their* feed.

On a certain afternoon, when I knew both lots of geese to be on their feeding ground, I settled down on another line of flight from the ground, hoping to collect a mallard for the larder at dusk. I had not set eyes on a wigeon since I saw a lot pass over of some 1,500 birds three weeks earlier. The only water on the marshes lies deep down in the channels and drains, and no wigeon had come in at all. As I sat in my hide enjoying the late afternoon sunshine, I was surprised to hear the geese calling (the sign that they were off), and I watched both lots rise into the air and finally vanish against the horizon like a large and small puff of black smoke.

Then, to my utter astonishment (for I had not brought my telescope with me, and so had not watched the feeding ground) several hundred wigeon shot up and followed in the wake of the geese. As odd birds (and two pochard, and some tufted) began to rise and, to catch up with those gone before, they cut a corner and came right over me, and I am utterly ashamed to say how many I missed, and can give no explanation at all for it. I now know, of course, that the duck had come from Knepp lake and/or from the lake of the other geese. I waited at flight on other evenings, but not until last night did some of the duck which had followed the geese show up and return with them, and I managed to kill three mallard, missing three shots at wigeon and two at other mallard.

Involved Timetable

But these things I have noted through observation. The larger lot of Canadas discovered the home (if they did not already know it) of the smaller lot, and joined them while their own lake was being drained, and they brought an unknown number of duck with them, the said duck at first following the goose flight line to the feeding grounds. Judging by sounds at night, the duck now come in after dark on their own, *but* somehow, a considerable number of our own mallard, having no doubt come upon good social terms with the visitors, at one time travelled back with them and the geese towards dusk, and thereupon discovered (this is conjecture, although I am sure I am right) that some hand-feeding went on at 4.30 sharp at or near the lake. Why else is it that I have watched, on the last two evenings, two lots of from fifteen to twenty mallard each and several smaller parties leap from the marsh at 4.25, rise steeply and make off as fast as may be towards where the goose lake lies? In the ordinary course of events, they would flight at deep dusk and make off in the other direction.

As to the daytime habit of the Canadas, they stay mostly in one corner of a private marsh, and you can sweep it with a glass, and, unless you catch one or two out sunning themselves, or grazing, you may see no signs of geese at all, though nearly a couple of hundred are there. Watching through the telescope recently, I could spy not a single bird, and could not believe they were present. Then I saw what looked like a sheep or lamb lying against a post on the bank of a dyke. I watched it for a long time, trying to make out exactly what it was. Suddenly, out came a long neck and I saw it was a goose, or gander lying on watch, but stretching out for a bite of grass. I saw that old bird in the same position, half over the bank, on two more occasions, and once or twice I caught sight of a black and white face appear above ground-level as one of the many birds deep down in the dyke lifted up to stretch.

Sometimes the geese call all the time they are in flight, especially if it is rough. Usually, however, there comes the clarion call, and, once on wing, they fly mute. One of the old ganders from Knepp Castle (I presume) stayed for nearly a week, always entirely on his own. I watched the two lots rise and wing homewards, yet at deepest dusk, perhaps an hour later, I would hear a goose calling and, thinking another flock was on wing, lie prone in an attempt to view it against the sky. But it was just the single bird, and it called all the time on wing, by daylight or at dusk. Was it a pricked bird? Or was it a driven-off aged outcast? I rather like to believe that it was a pricked bird, and that it was wise enough to stay (unless disturbed in the day time) on the marsh until very deepest dusk, thus hoping to "stagger" after the rest under the protective cloak of growing darkness. But if that was the case, why did it call continually and thus give its presence away? Your guess is as good as mine.

Rails and Quails

by Sea-Pie

WE find listed in the First Schedule of the Protection of Birds Act, 1954, two birds which were formerly regarded as fair game by British sportsmen. This schedule lists under "special penalties" certain species which are regarded as sufficiently uncommon to be deserving of protection all the year round—among them the landrail and the quail. We all bow to the wisdom of the High Court of Parliament, yet I occasionally hark back nostagically to the days when we went partridge shooting under the South Downs in Sussex, and a few brace of landrails were regarded as an agreeable addition to the bag.

I remember one sloping grass-field beneath the shadow of Wolstonbury, which we used to walk up in early September, where my father always made me stand "forward on the right," knowing that any landrails which had run ahead would be sure to break out at the farthest corner. I can still see the brown Sussex spaniels bustling about in front of father and our keeper Crossthwaite and the landrails lumbering up with down-hanging legs, offering the targets which father described as "schoolboys' delights."

I am no lawyer, but as far as I can make out from a perusal of the 1954 Act, we should now be liable after an hour like that in the Horthy field, to "a fine not exceeding £25" for each landrail, or to "a term of imprisonment not exceeding one month." *Aut tempores aut mores* glibly murmurs Virgil—don't tell me it wasn't Virgil, it is so long since I was at Haileybury—but in those far-off happy days we little thought the time would surely come when a brace of landrails might conceivably land us all three in Lewes gaol. I don't know what old Crossthwaite would have said, but perhaps I can guess.

As for quails I never saw one in Sussex. But our relative, William Borrer, the Cowfold naturalist, who was then writing his "Birds of Sussex," remembered when they were almost common in the county, and their nests were mown out in the fields near his house and on Henfield common and even quite close to Brighton itself. But that would be back in the 1860s, when quail often stayed with us all through the winter.

My grandfather had a sporting property in Lincolnshire as well as in the south country. An amusing story he used to tell shows how plentiful quails were on the wolds. A young keeper was sent up from Sussex to get a little extra experience, and he was so eager to display his qualities that he kept on calling out "'ware cheepers" during the first week in September. As often as not this put off inexperienced guns from shooting at quails, which were grandfather's favourite table birds. "If you call out 'cheepers' again Smith," exclaimed the exasperated old gentleman at last, "I'll send you back to Sussex."

Turned-Down Quails

Many people have wasted time and money turning down quails in the futile hope of thus increasing the stock. In East Anglia, for example, attempts were made many years ago to establish the Virginian Golin at Holkham, and the birds at first seemed to thrive well. The trouble was that whenever they wandered off the ground of the Lord Leicester of the day they were invariably killed off by local sportsman unaware of the birds' origin.

At one time the colins did so well that the Rev. John Burrell of Letheringsett wrote of them as "quite colonised creatures and so numerous are the covies that report says the poachers cannot destroy them because their manners are so watchful and shy of man." Attempts are also known to have been made at Attleborough to introduce the Californian quail, but with no permanent success.

The so-called "common" quail is most erratic in its visits to Norfolk at the present time. I often hear them calling in the wheat and clover fields in early June, but sometimes a year or two will pass without a bird being detected. Many of the local farmers and field labourers know the quail's distinctive call and I have on several occasions had quails' eggs brought me. They are handsome objects of two types, the blotched and the spotted, and in the days of the egg-collector they were greatly prized and much sought after.

The eggs of the landrail also vary a good deal, and some Irish collectors who specialised in them could show some clutches which one would scarcely credit were those of the landrail. The bird has much decreased of recent years not only in England but also in the Emerald Isle. In my own early birds-nesting days in Ireland thirty-odd years ago landrails were so abundant that three or four nests could easily be found in a single morning. County Tipperary was noted among naturalists not only for the swarms of landrails in the grasslands, but for the beauty and rich markings of their eggs. In parts of the west of Ireland and on some of the sea-girt islands they are reported to be as numerous as ever, so that the landrail is not likely to die out in Paddyland as the quail did.

The latter is said to be nesting again at the present time in Carlow, Kildare and Antrim. Nobody seems to know for certain why landrail and quail increase and decrease over periods of years. Today, quail are much commoner in East Anglia than in Ireland, where at one time they were abundant and resident.

Family of the Rails

The feathered family of the rails, apart from the landrail, has always had a special fascination for me, partly, I suppose, on account of the difficulty of finding their nests and the birds' secretive habits. My brothers and I when boys in Sussex used to hunt out the water-hens and water-rails in autumn along the Albourne brook and the sheep-washes around Danny and Hurstpierpoint. Looking back through the mist of memories of sixty years, I can remember we occasionally flushed a bird that was different from the water-rails, which I now have little doubt was a spotted-rail.

I still possess the ancient family copy of Morris' "British Birds," the six volumes of which adorned grandfather's study at Hurst Rectory. These cherished books were standing on the floor of my library at Cley when the floods burst in on that memorable January evening four years ago and spoiled them. But they are still readable. How ingenuous the worthy parson Morris is and how refreshingly simple. "It runs" (the spotted-rail, he tells us), "with long strides and the body near the ground." What more can be said of the actions of any rail? How delightful too are the coloured plates painted almost exactly a hundred years ago, beloved by those who knew them before the days of photography and super-bird-portraiture. In "Morris" we found our strange rail.

Once or twice when living in Norfolk I have encountered the spotted-rail and heard it calling in the great reedbeds at Cley-next-Sea, where I have not the slightest doubt it breeds occasionally, if not regularly. When going down to my own marsh at Salthouse one October morning in order to get a water-hen for a ferret, I heard a shot ahead of me and presently encountered a youth who I well knew took an occasionaly poach round my small domain. "I'll have that bird in your pocket, Sonny," I remarked with my usual affability, thinking he had probably knocked down a moorhen or possibly a teal. Out of his pocket came a spotted-rail.

Hit the Telegraph Wires

On another occasion, when cycling down to the same spot early one April day before breakfast, a spotted-rail evidently on migration hit the telegraph wire and fell dead in the main road just in front of me. I was much struck by the brilliance of the bird's hazel eyes and the yellow and red tints of the beak, though the colours faded out in less than an hour.

Even more difficult than the spotted rail to catch so much as a glimpse of is the Baillon's rail. It is no bigger than a rat. In the course of a lifetime a British naturalist is lucky if he ever sees one. It has definitely been known to breed in the English fens and probably does so more often than is generally supposed. The late Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain, who knew more about birds' eggs than any other man before or since his day, told me he had seen eggs taken in Norfolk which were undoubtedly those of Baillon's rail. But in the reedy wilderness of Broadland the chances are ten thousand to one against a nest of such a secretive species being found.

The late E. T. Booth, the celebrated bird collector, recorded that when snipe shooting on Heigham Sounds one day his dog put up an undoubted Baillon's rail. Unfortunately, he had just emptied his gun and the diminutive quarry vanished in the reeds before he could insert another cartridge. Booth not only spent several hours with men and dogs trying to flush the bird again without success, but having discovered the footprints of at least two small rails in the soft muds, he set three dozen small steel-fall traps in the hope of catching one. He caught nothing but moorhen and coot.

The late Mr. Hart, the Hampshire naturalist, had a pair with their downy chicks taken in the county. He possibly had more patience than Booth. Even the patience of modern bird-watchers is easily exhausted by the little rail named after the worthy Monsieur Emmanuel Baillon, an old world student of the birds of Picardy.

A sloping grass-field beneath the shadow of the downs.

The reward of a beautiful snap-shot.

AN EARLY GOOSE

by C. W. Miller

ONLY the keel of the upturned dinghy showed above a bed of wet nettles in a corner of the farm stackyard when we arrived at the coast on September 21. It was the first "seaborne" fowling trip of the season. One setback after another at the start made it seem doomed to failure, and then, after some pleasant surprises, the bag at the end of the day included the first goose of the season and a nice collection of early wigeon.

Rain had fallen for most of the week in the West of Scotland and floodwater everywhere allowed the fowl to dabble where they pleased over a wide area. Prospects of a decent flight at dusk seemed poor. To add to the disappointment a set of oars kept in the farm implement shed were missing and it took almost an hour to track them down to the borrower who had forgotten to put them back.

The anchor had disappeared and had to be temporarily replaced by a steel wheel chock which, when embedded in the soft mud, proved to be an admirable substitute. Such were the pitfalls of not being able to take earlier stock of our equipment so far from home.

Swirling waters of the river in spate threatened to snatch the boat from our hands as the four of us launched her. Rowing across-current was hot, hard work, and a large semi-circle was described as we were swept down river, then rowed back up the shallows before grounding on the opposite bank.

No sooner had we set off over the sand, bound for the edge of the marsh beyond, than a party of mallard, obviously a brood of the year, flew straight for us from the mouth of the estuary. Although we remained stock-still, like posts planted in the mud, they still flew on at "gift" height before deciding it would be better to swing to the right and follow a deep back-water just out of range. "Young, but educated," remarked Harry, who has the amusing habit of classifying the behaviour of birds.

Dangerous Changes

Treacherous ditches stretch like tentacles from the marsh and although we know them well the between-season tides can work drastic changes, scouring out deep holes where there were once good crossing places, or creating death-traps of liquid mud in previously deep drains now rapidly silting up.

It was approaching one of these that Harry gave a warning shout. I had just time to glance round and see Ossie swinging up and on to a fast departing goose which must have been sitting below the bank some twenty yards away. Hardly had the butt touched his shoulder when the gun went off and the goose folded up and plummeted like a stone. A beautiful snap-shot of which anyone could have been proud.

"The first goose! The first goose!" he shouted back in glee as he tore along the bank for his bird. For the rest of us we had hardly had chance to recover from our surprise when he returned holding aloft his prize—a handsome young pinkfoot.

"Well," said Brian, "your new gun certainly throws a good pattern judging by the way that one crumpled at extreme range. Was it a 2¾in. BB?"

"BB be ———. A 2½in. Grand Prix with No. 4s," he said proudly, extracting the empty.

Probably a Straggler

It certainly was a good start because I know for a fact that he ended last season without even a goose feather after almost weekly outings! The chances of the goose being a pricked bird can be almost discounted. The manner and speed at which it left proved beyond doubt that it was extremely healthy, and a close examination showed it was well nourished. Having seen a number of other early arrivals of pinkfeet at a distance later in the day, it was agreed that the bird had more than likely been a young straggler resting in the gutter.

Some distance ahead we were waiting under the lip of a bank debating likely flight positions when a familiar faint line appeared on the horizon. Beyond doubt they were geese making towards us. On and on they came, twenty feet up at the most. A single *honk* immediately identified them as greylags, fifteen beauties, ours for the asking, or so I thought. Another peep and there they were sitting on a sandbar a hundred and twenty yards away.

I was given the honour of the stalk and set off, bent double, away to the left along a shallow drain. A detour behind some higher ground to landward of the flock brought me to a second drain which I knew skirted the spot where the birds were sitting. Sweat streamed down my forehead and dripped from the end of my nose, despite a distinct nip in the air. First the game-bag was left behind, followed by my waterproof and jacket at various intervals. In shirt sleeves I rounded the last bend and startled a redshank which rose in alarm, its shrill piping echoing along the ditch. All I heard was a whirring of wings and saw the greylays beating a hasty and safe retreat seaward.

It was already turning dusk when a flock of wigeon planed in to let on a water flash before we had reached our stands. Brian and I shot at the same instant and a single bird fell stone dead. The drizzle had stopped; but the dense, dark clouds made a poor background, and although the flight was a good one, it was a case of snap-shooting before the duck disappeared in the gloom.

Twice I let single mallard pass, thinking they were swinging in to land on the floodwater I had selected. Instead, I never saw them again. I should have known better.

A flock of golden plover skimmed by with a single teal in their midst. It was impossible to lift the gun quickly enough. Overhead two wigeon appeared, and I collected one with the second barrel. This I placed as a decoy on the water, and in doing so missed seeing two lots of teal before they were at me and past with the speed of rocket-assisted darts. Five wigeon loomed up and I killed one before they vanished. It was a plump cock, not properly in full winter plumage.

After all the excitement of the last hour was over I suddenly realised my fingers and feet were numb with cold. "At this rate no wonder the geese and wigeon are here in such unusually large numbers so early," I thought to myself. As well as the goose, we had collected eight wigeon and one teal between us — a memorable start to the season.

In the Kitchen

by PENELOPE TURING

Hot or cold, pheasant takes pride of place in the kitchen and on the table, and now that the pheasant season has come round again perhaps a few notes on cooking it may prove useful.

Roast Pheasant: Pluck and draw the bird and singe it carefully. Wipe the inside with a moist cloth, and truss ready for roasting. Wash the giblets having first removed the gall-bag from the liver, and take out the inside of the gizzard. Put the giblets with a few beef bones (first washed) into a saucepan and cover with stock or water. Add one onion with some cloves stuck into it, seasoning and a bunch of herbs, and bring to the boil slowly. Skim, and then simmer gently for three or four hours. Cover the breast of the bird with a rasher of fat bacon and roast in the oven with plenty of dripping for from 1 to 1¼ hours according to the age; baste often. About 15 minutes before the pheasant is cooked remove the bacon and allow the breast to brown. Fry a thick slice of bread and serve the bird on it, decorating the dish with watercress. Serve brown gravy, bread sauce and fried breadcrumbs separately.

Make the gravy by pouring off the roasting fat and adding the strained stock to the meat pan. Bring to the boil, adding a little browning if necessary.

Cold Pheasant: Cold pheasant is delicious when jointed and covered with a chaudfroid sauce. Soak ½oz. of leaf gelatine in a gill of cold water for five minutes, then dissolve it slowly. Mix 1 dessertspoonful of gravy powder, ¼ pint of water flavoured with half a meat cube, and the juice of half an orange in a saucepan; bring to the boil, stirring all the time, and boil for three minutes. Add 1 tablespoonful of red currant jelly. Pour the melted gelatine on to the sauce and leave till quite cold. When it begins to thicken pour the sauce over the joints of pheasant and leave to set. Serve with a green salad.

Round the Game Preserves

by David Imrie

ALTHOUGH I have known a few keepers who were dismissed from their jobs, I cannot remember one who got the sack for being without proper training. In every instance these dismissed men possessed a good knowledge of their craft and were honest; so they became redundant from other causes. The first man in this category had to move because he was reputed to like more than a wee drappie. Nevertheless, he was, as far as I could see, a model keeper. When he appeared at the Kennels, he was always smartly dressed, and correct in every way. But his beat was a considerable distance off; therefore, the headkeeper, being without a car in those days, could not give him much supervision. I was sorry to see the chappie go; but I realised that a keeper who allows himself to become tipsy too often in a nearby town inevitably encourages poaching. A butcher, a baker, and a candlestick maker can become inebriated as often as they like without arousing the enmity of their employers, providing that they turn up to work sober; but the keeper, being theoretically always on duty, is not permitted the same latitude.

In later years I knew another keeper who was dismissed not because he became drunk habitually but because he liked to spend his evenings in some place of public entertainment. Here again a man was leaving his part of the estate unguarded. In this case he had charge of hand-reared pheasants, which are rather vulnerable; and however much we may deplore a system which penalises a man for having mild enjoyment in congenial company, we are bound to admit that the viewpoint of an employer or a headkeeper in circumstances of this sort was justified.

Even long service does not protect a keeper from dismissal at times. One man with about 50 years of efficient game preservation to his credit on the same estate was put into compulsory retirement because he went off with some friends one day to a clay pigeon shoot without telling his employer. Normally the employer would have passed over this lapse with a rebuke, if it had come to his notice, which was exceedingly uncertain. However, the keeper and his friends had a car accident, and the resulting publicity did the rest. An example of this kind shows us that we must not take liberties even after a lifetime of service.

An Eye to the Future

Another keeper with half a century to his credit on the same estate had to get out when the late owner's son took over. This happening is probably quite common. It does not matter whether the old keeper is efficient or not. The new proprietor arrives with ambitious ideas; and if he does not care for him, he gets his notice. It is probably true, of course that the keeper whom I am mentioning was inclined to snub the new squire when he was a youngster; which provides us with a further object lesson to the effect that the heir to the estate ought not to be bullied when this can be practised with impunity, otherwise he may decide to have his revenge one day.

Still another keeper with a record of long service got his notice presumably for allowing his son to go shooting on the estate with his friends. In this respect landed proprietors are not unanimous. Some refuse rigidly to have strangers on the ground, except by their express permission; some are not so strict, but they all would expect the keeper himself to be present at every shoot, whether casual or otherwise. In this instance the son of the keeper, who had no connections with the estate, was, I understand, in sole charge of the party when he was accosted. Therefore, trouble ensued.

And the trouble can ensue for a young keeper if he has a barely-concealed contempt for the organisation of the game department. One stripling was employed on a place between 30 and 40 years ago where excessive economy was the rule. He soon discovered that there was no fuel allowance for boiling dog food, which was made in a big copper about twice each week; so he had to use his own coal. One night when he was trying to read in the bothy with an oil lamp equipped with half a glass, the headkeeper came in. Brought face to face with something which required immediate attention, he had to take action; for bothies are supposed to be kept properly furnished by the estate management. So the head went off, and returned with a stable lamp. The care of the bothy and the changing of bed linen were also casual matters, although the youth was assured when he was engaged that these things would get regular attention. Finally, he could not conceal his dissatisfaction, and was dismissed. Incidentally, he got an excellent reference by making a stubborn stand for one on the day of his departure.

Redundant Keepers

A great many keepers are sacked, however, simply because there is no longer work for them. Sometimes a good tenant gives up a shoot which the owner cannot maintain, and the keeper has to go. If he does not actually leave the estate, he may be requested to join another department. I can think of three keepers at the moment who are still theoretically in their same jobs, but are in reality woodmen, or gardeners. There are probably scores with the same indefinite status, but the majority have to move elsewhere.

Even back in the comparatively prosperous 1930s this sort of redundancy was quite common. Two young keepers, who were quite unaware of contemplated changes, were summoned one morning at 10 o'clock to the Big House. Still without knowledge of their fate they were ushered through to the squire's study. There they saw, in addition to their employer who was seated, the estate factor standing at one side of the desk and the headkeeper at the other. They took up their positions in front of the chief and soon became aware that they were being sacked in the grand manner.

First they were told that there was nothing against their characters. They were being dismissed reluctantly. The staff had to be cut down, owing to the discontinuation of rearing; then the squire went on to say that he had found two suitable posts for the unlucky lads. Finally the squire thanked them for their services, while the factor and the headkeeper looked from floor to ceiling and back again in embarrassed silence.

Breaking it Gently

It is not often that a nobleman will take all this trouble when underlings have to be dismissed. Usually the headkeeper does this distasteful duty without much fuss. One whom I knew simply turned to the underman when they were hanging up game in the larder after the last shoot, and said casually: "I suppose you know that an underkeeper on this estate generally gets the sack when rearing is stopped?" Thus did he impart the unpleasant news as diplomatically as possible.

No doubt, the keeper who becomes redundant receives something of a shock, although this is not so severe now as it used to be when competition for jobs was keen. But if one's self-esteem is hurt, it is certainly not wise to do what one elderly keeper did. He sat down and wrote a scarifying letter to the retiring shooting tenant, whose refusal to renew the lease had forced the employer's hand. This bitterness came, of course, from the knowledge that he would not easily get another place. But a young keeper, who is capable and honest, need not worry unduly. I knew a youth who was dismissed from an unsatisfactory estate, and who secured another job in short time which provided him with a 33 per cent increase in cash wages plus better perquisites and ideal working conditions. So the sack for him was a blessing in disguise.

Before I stop I must mention that the music of hounds has already been heard in our valley. In fact, it started prematurely. The other Monday evening I passed the huntsman in a lane as he was taking the pack to their kennels for the week at the village inn. Hounds appeared to be in excellent fettle, and had then accounted for five foxes. On my way home at dusk I was astonished to see three hounds at different places far behind the point where I had met them an hour previously. Later I learned that a fox on the prowl must have crossed the lane before I met the huntsman; for all the uncoupled members of the pack had suddenly gone clamouring towards the summit of Swinside Fell. The hunt lasted until after dark, and caused the huntsman a tremendous lot of bother.

The music of hounds has already been heard in the valley.

The Young Shot

A Marsh Reclaimed

by Petrel

Let it rain, let it pour,
Nothing worries me.

THUS, you will recall, begins a chorus of one of the older songs, and how applicable it is at this moment. Not that I am off to Alabama ; I am heading no further than two fields away, and in place of a banjo I shall be nursing a 12-bore across my knee, but otherwise the sentiment is apt.

Patience has paid off. For two years I have watched wistfully the splash of silver that appears with the October rains, deepen and spread until in a wet season, it extends for half a mile along the bottom of steeply sloping park and pasture land. Once upon a time, before the course of its feeder stream was changed in an attempt to reclaim a few more arable acres, this depression formed the boating lake of the mansion on the hill, and now, although dry for eight months of the year, its high water table and low contours ensure early collection and almost continuous holding of rain throughout four of the months which matter most. Efforts to plough and sow a crop of any sort have always failed and the land is left to grass which grows sweet and succulent in these water-meadows. That is the first crop, gathered and much appreciated by a handsome herd of Guernseys. The second, winter harvest comprises mallard and teal.

Back to Normal

Minutes after moving into my cottage from whose bathroom window this flooded strip is clearly visible, I realised the possibilities and for one and a half seasons flighting permission was mine. Then complications set in, the shooting was let and I retired from the scene. I did not lack for sport elsewhere, but inland flighting of similar quality and so close to home was out of the question and the sight of untouchable duck skimming low above my old hides to dibbles which I had so carefully fed, caused me many a sleepless night.

It is sometimes very fortunate that not all shooting tenants behave with the circumspection which we who write in this journal do our best to promote. Here was a case in point, for had those who usurped my position of privilege conducted themselves to the satisfaction of landowner and neighbours, I should still be losing sleep. As it was, however, in due course they were asked to leave, and it has taken more than a sunny smile to dispel the cloud under which they left. But good neighbourliness counts for a lot, and the *status quo* is now happily restored. Enthusiasm on both sides was renewed. "There's at least thirty duck down there now," said the farm foreman on his return from getting the cows in. "You'd better get after them before they move off." With an eye for the weather, I had my doubts about them leaving in a hurry, for rain was forecast for some days to come. As soon as I could, I began to prepare for their reception and Saturday morning saw me busily reviewing the situation and building a hide.

Setting up Shop

There were several points to be considered before finally deciding on the site of my ambuscade. First of all I had to take into account the prevailing wind. Hereabouts its direction is predominantly south-west, so remembering that duck always land against the wind—if it is blowing at any strength at all—I had to position myself in the best upwind place to take the birds at the lowest point of their landing approach. This was simple to determine, but further thought disclosed several drawbacks. In the first place, the ground here was open and any hide except a hole in the ground would stand out like the proverbial sore thumb. Due to the proximity of the water table to the surface, it was impossible to dig down more than a foot or two before flooding the pit, so that a hide in this position was out of the question. A closer look revealed a better idea.

On the downwind side of the flash grew a tangle of sedge between the boundary railings and the barbed wire fence that forms the necessary barrier between an attested herd and a bunch of "mongrel" steers. This offered the concealing background required of any hide, and at the same time ensured that no cattle could reach far enough to rub against, or worse, consume the hide material.

The hide itself was built on the now well established, Petrel's patent principle, being a "sandwich" of hay and/or straw encased in five foot high wire netting. Supported on three metal posts—stripped from an old kennel railing—and wired to the barbed fence, this structure has withstood the recent wind-blasts and garnished with greenery and thistles that grow in prickly profusion round about, it is almost invisible to the human eye, let alone that of a duck, at twenty yards.

Behind it, some ten yards away I have built a similar hide in miniature for the dogs. Cramped at my feet they would have no knowledge of what was going on and would have to rely entirely upon their ears to mark a fall. In their own drier concealment on the higher ground they are not only more comfortable, but can mark a fallen duck by eye as well, which saves a deal of time on a runner when a speedy retrieve in the middle of a flight is most necessary.

On this first evening I was early in position. Normally no flight proper is expected until dusk, but by four o'clock the sky was overcast and the light already dull, so that in all probability the duck would start to move earlier than usual. Moreover, when the floods are new, there is always the likelihood of odd duck, particularly teal, wandering about the area throughout the afternoon, especially on a Saturday when shooting parties are abroad along the valley.

The duck which visit this flooded depression of an evening find their way here from the private lakes, the gravel pits and the river, and those that leave the river have not far to come, for the Kennet, with its reedy bays and backwaters, lies but a punt-gun shot away.

Ready and Waiting

Facing the south-east I waited, watching the sky through the peepholes in the hide, but resisting the temptation to strain my eyes at every passing shadow, which is the quickest way to a pain in the neck and blurred vision, and in case quite unnecessary, for unless the wind is strong, when mallards' wing beats can be heard is time enough to look for them. Knowing their line of approach and that they were bound to make a circuit before pitching in, I was certain of plenty of time. This does not apply to the teal, however, for it is the habit of these little speed merchants to disregard the wind and drop in from any angle. A *prrt* of wings, a faint splash, and they are down and almost invisible against the grass tussocks. One must stay very wide awake to snap a shot at them.

I was confident this evening that I had left nothing to chance. The final obstacle, a nosey heifer that had persisted in maintaining its post-rubbing station directly in the line of fire despite a mud ball bombardment, at last decided to join its fellows out of gunshot, and all that remained was for me to shoot straight when the duck that were bound to come appeared. But I had forgotten Guy Fawkes and the celebrations that mark his anniversary. Someone in a cottage beyond the river decided to jump the gun by three days and with the first of a series of shattering bangs the ducks for yards around jumped too. Straight up in the air they went, turned, and set their beaks for Hampshire.

Two returned when it was almost too dark to see to shoot and one was collected after a poor shot and a smart bit of dog work close to the river bank. A straggler paid too much attention to the *hubble-bubble* chatter of my call and collapsed not twenty yards up, directly above the hide, and a cock teal completed the bag.

Satisfactory enough, by usual modest standards, but disappointing in the light of expectations.

The hide, the hounds and a flooded corner on a dull, dank morning.

KENYA RAINBOWS

by Alan Savory

FISHING in the Amboni River was always a delight, but it was so deep down in its rocky gorge that the heat was like that of a tropical greenhouse. There was seldom any movement in the air and the little jungle stream sang softly through its rocky sides and little waterfalls as if it was singing in a whisper and half afraid of being heard. There were palm trees overhanging the stream where weaver birds built secret nests, and tangled vines and thickets of wild geranium and nettles, and there were broad leaved Bana ferns. One walked on tiptoe, slowly and carefully and chose every step. Looking up at the creeper grown cliff face in Death Valley one could see the bees working in and out of the lonely Kikuyu grave and the broken ladder leading up to it; and perhaps a vulture slowly circling in great sweeps of sky far up where the sun shone.

The fishing was not easy, but every now and then one would come to a tiny open place by the river where one could cast, or at any rate dangle a fly in the water. A Royal Coachman was the fly to use here and the rainbows fought hard and sullenly and seldom showed themselves until they could be guided into the landing-net. They were splendid fish and averaged a pound, but two-pounders were not uncommon. They were never easy to catch and the rainstorms in the hills seemed to upset their feeding habits. There were many otters; the rocks were often strewn with their droppings which were mostly crab shell.

There is a peculiar theory amongst the trout experts in Kenya, they have the same ideas in Natal too, that the African otters do not eat fish. They say they have never found traces of fish in the digestive organs or in the cast of an otter and that they only feed on freshwater crab. It is a theory that I find impossible to accept. It is however, a comforting thought and saves a lot of trouble in dealing with an impossible situation. Otters are legion about these streams. It is an African idea to save oneself from going mad. One cannot deal with the otters, so one may as well say they do not eat trout and hope for the best. But it is remarkable that one never comes across a dead trout with the tell-tale bites across its back.

There are other pests however, quite apart from otters which haunt some of the streams, and the Italian prisoners during the war taught the natives how to catch trout with a bag full of doctored posho which is a deadly method of clearing a stream. But deep in the wild Amboni valley we were free from wholesale destruction like this, though there was always the hazard of coming suddenly on a Mau Mau gang who were lying low in the thick bush by the river. Some people always had an armed guard when they went fishing, but John and I preferred to tiptoe along with a revolver handy in case of trouble. I found fishing by myself rather an eerie pastime, although completely fascinating. It was so quiet and still in the valley by the stream that one could hear the sibilant swish of the wings of the great emperor swallowtail butterflies as they flitted like gilded toys in the shade of the crawling vines.

Ants In My Pants

There were very few mosquitoes and no midges as the altitude was in the region of 6,000 feet, but there were untold billions of small red ants that had a nasty habit of getting into the turn-ups of one's trousers and then going on safari until they reached the more delicate parts of one's anatomy, and then digging in.

One extremely hot and humid afternoon when the red rump swallows were cutting arcs and circles in the still air and the tawny bush buck were out feeding on the rocky slopes of the Amboni gorge, I wandered slowly up the track from the river, over the cow pasture and up the road to the house where Lindy greeted me on the lawn, to find a tea party in full swing. I was just drinking my second cup of tea when a red hot needle suddenly stabbed me in a more than usually intimate spot, then a series of needles began a wild tattoo. I was told that it looked, "Just too funny." But on investigation in the privacy of my bedroom I found no less than twenty-three red ants standing on their heads with their fangs buried to the hilt in my epidermis. All the sympathy that I got on my return to the tea party was a request for a repeat performance.

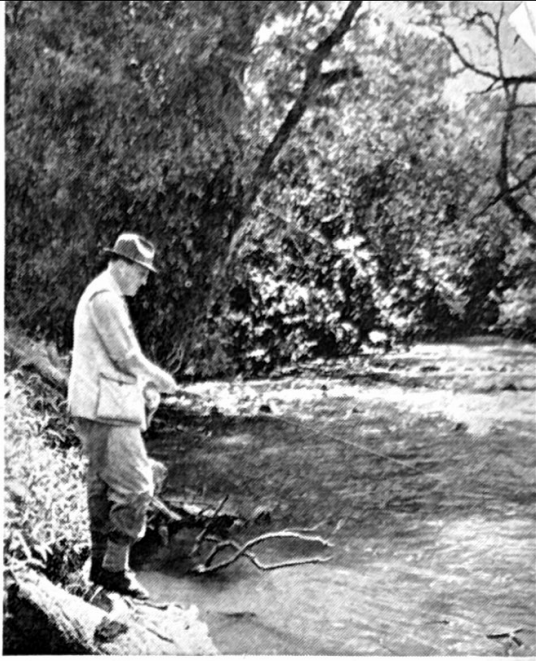
Baboons were a trouble in the mealie patches belonging to the native labour and in the vegetable gardens. They lived in the bush across the Amboni valley and used to raid the gardens at dusk. Sometimes one of the farm guards shot one and was rewarded with a shilling, but we always had to cut the tails off the slain or they would be produced again next day. The farm guards were of various tribes and were armed with single barrel 12-bores. If they were given more than five cartridges they would poach the game on the farm, but it was difficult to prove that they had used the cartridges on baboons or in defence of the cattle unless they could bring evidence.

Barbaric Customs

The natives of Kenya, of whatever tribe they come from are ruled by peculiar beliefs and superstitions and are unable to comprehend compassion or sorrow in the suffering of animals or even of their own kind. The Kikuyu will calmly drag an ailing relative out of his hut into the bush for the hyenas to chop rather than let him die peacefully in bed, because their customs decree that a hut wherein a death takes place must be burned. It seems a more than usually barbaric custom, but they think nothing of it. They will break the legs of captured buck to prevent them escaping and perform rites in the name of witchcraft that would shock the civilised world to its roots. But if a quarrel starts between two natives they just go completely mad and froth at the mouth and often fall down in a fit.

Some of the Samburu used to have fits just through sheer excitement. Lekubhia's brother returned from leave in the Northern Frontier District and Lekubhia was so pleased to see him back and hear all the news that he just keeled over on the gravel drive. All concerned thought it was a tremendous joke and made no attempt to drag their fellow tribesman out of the hot sun into the shade. Lekubhia got up after about half-an-hour as if nothing had happened. I often wondered if this extreme nerveousness was caused by internal parasites, bad diet, mostly blood and milk, inbreeding or just the half-animal-half-human way of life of the African wild native.

These two farm guards from the cattle ranch across the Amboni were very concerned about my solitary wanderings by the river and used to watch for me across miles of bush and then suddenly appear from behind a rock while I was fishing and present arms with their 12-bores and then sit down and watch and keep guard. The capture of a fish would send them nearly mad. They would dance about and laugh and seize the landing-net and try and beat at the fish in the water. We had several tussles over the net, but Kwam who was of a calmer disposition than Lekubhia became quite a useful gillie. The trouble was that I would never know where they were until they appeared and was always scared that I might shoot one in a moment of panic.



John fishing the Banguret.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

Fixture List

Nov. 20: Annual General Meeting of the Scottish Clay Pigeon Association, Waverley Hotel, Perth, 3.30 p.m. (Committee Meeting, 2.30 p.m.)
Nov. 23: Bowland and District G.C., nr. Clitheroe, Lancs. Open Shoot.
Nov. 24: Beverley and District G.C., Yorks. Members' Shoot. 1 p.m.
Nov. 30: North Wales G.C. 100 Bird Continental Ball Trap Shoot. 1 p.m.
Dec. 1: Birmingham G.C., Brockhill Lane, Redditch. 10 a.m.
Dec. 1: Harrogate G.C., Yorks. Members' Shoot. 1.45 p.m.
Dec. 1: Bisley G.C. Wappenschaw Shoot.
Dec. 14: Bedford and District G.C., Elstow. Wappenshaw event.
Dec. 15: Birmingham G.C., Brockhill Lane, Redditch. 10 a.m.
Dec. 21: Childrey C.P.S.C. Wappenshaw Shoot.
Dec. 22: Beverley and District G.C., Yorks. Members' Christmas Shoot. 1 p.m.
Dec. 26: Bowland and District G.C., nr. Clitheroe, Lancs. Open Shoot. 12.30 p.m.

* * *

Reports and Results

The Bisley Gun Club meeting held on November 3 attracted a field of 29 guns, two of whom, one a young lady, and both new to the sport, shot through the programme for practice only. There were several visitors, three from Herts and one young soldier stationed at Aldershot among them, and the club officials hope that they had a pleasant day at Bisley, and that they will all come along on some future occasions.

The standard of shooting was again very good, and there were quite a lot "up on handicap." The ties soon eliminated most of these, and the final results were: High gun, A. G. Beslee, 2. R. J. Wensley, and equal third R. A. Denham and G. Horn. The latter, who was the young soldier referred to above, shot remarkably well, and earned the very good opinion of the club members. Unfortunately, he left before the prize giving, but if he will contact the club secretary, his prize will be forwarded to him, or it may be collected at the next shoot. The handicap prizes were won by H. B. Readings, N. E. V. Dance and H. T. D. Brunt.

Miss Plantrose, who shot through the programme showed considerable promise at the sport, and with 31/50 kills might well be proud of her first appearance at Bisley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters and photographs are invited for this page. They should be as brief as possible, and the names and addresses of senders must be given, though these need not necessarily be published. Correspondence should be addressed to The Editor, The Shooting Times & Country Magazine, 29 Old Bond Street, London, W.1. 'Phone: HYDe Park 2556/2557.

BIRD IDENTIFICATION

Sir,—I am enclosing a foot, a wing, and the bill of a duck for identification. I shot it last winter near Jhelum in the Punjab (32 deg. 30′ N. 73 deg. 30′ S.). It is probably a young female of either the common white-eye (*Nyroca ferruginea*), or the eastern white-eye (*Nyroca baeri*).

If either of these, what is the distinguishing mark? If the latter, has it been recorded before in this area? I shall be grateful for the answer.

H.J.,
Quetta, West Pakistan.

[We submitted the remains to Mr. R. W. Sims, Senior Scientific Officer, Bird Section of the British Museum (Natural History), who very kindly writes as follows. "The head, wing and foot are of the eastern white-eye pochard, *Aythya nyroca baeri*. This race may be easily separated from the western form, *A.n. nyroca*, by the head, apart from a small chestnut patch on the face at the base of the bill, being black; whereas it is uniformly chestnut in the latter race. At this stage I have referred only to a few major works of reference, but it seems likely that this is the first time that this race has been taken in the Punjab. Usually it extends westwards from China only as far as Assam, but it has been recorded in some of the eastern provinces of India."—Ed.]

BILL POWELL—R.S.V.P.

Sir,—I was more than a little intrigued by a lengthy feature article in *The Scottish Sunday Express* of October 13, entitled "50,000 Pinkfeet Make a Goose Out of Me," written by Peter Dundas describing a morning's goose flight with Bill Powell, the Solway professional, and his party.

What particularly intrigued me were the following points. Fifty thousand pinkfeet presumably referred to a count of individual feet! Surely even half that number would be stretching the Solway population of pinkfeet a bit.

Then, having read all or most of Bill Powell's articles which have appeared in your journal during recent years, I was more than surprised, indeed shocked, to read the following paragraph: "They came all right. Over five hundred pinkfeet, but flying so high and so fast it would have needed an A.A. gun to hit them. Majestic in their steady flight, they passed directly overhead, quinking derisively as we loosed off a few barrels at random. I'll swear they did not even look down."

Surely Bill Powell insisted in seeing a copy of this article before it was printed. It not, why not? And if so, what has he got to say for himself?

R.S.W.-L.,
Cambridge.

SOCIAL EVENT

Sir,—On Wednesday, November 27, my Club is holding its first social event, the occasion being a buffet dance at the Foxlydiate Hotel, Redditch. The hotel is situated on the main Stratford-on-Avon-Bromsgrove Road and about 1½ miles from Redditch. We would be pleased to welcome any readers living round this part of the Midlands, or any who happen to be in the area on this day. I think we could promise them a very enjoyable time.

Should any of your readers like to make up a party for this occasion, would they please contact me as early as possible, as tickets are limited.

A. E. JOHNSON
(Hon. secretary, The Birmingham Gun Club), 33 Alcester Street, Redditch.

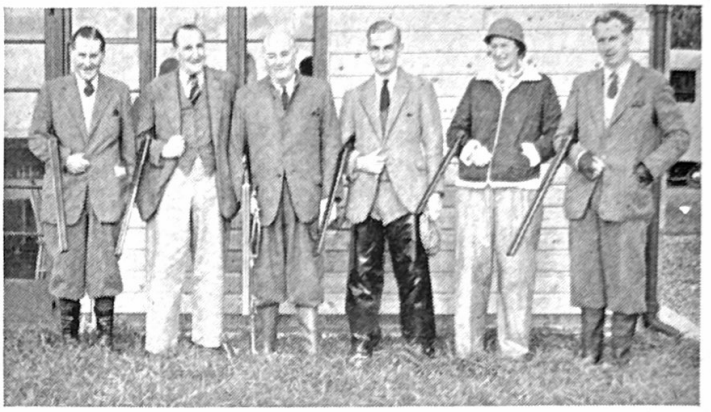
REVENGE

Sir,—There is no need for me to remind readers of the guile unceasingly employed by that scavenger of the game preserves the carrion crow. It and other members of the clan are too often found guilty of the foulest crimes against the young of game and song birds, and it gives me as much, if not more pleasure to destroy one of them than it does to shoot a cock pheasant. Too often have crows escaped while I was decoying pigeon by their uncanny knack of circling my hide, just out of range.

However, the tables have now been turned since I have purchased a fully choked 12-bore. Several days ago when I was on my way home after a successful day over pigeon decoys, I passed through a small copse which usually "houses" several carrion. As I gained the slope on the outer edge, a pair of them took wing, climbed steeply, and began circling me at a radius of about 60 yards literally "yelling their heads off." In the past, when I owned a less formidable weapon, they would have been allowed to continue.

No doubt they still believed they were *just* out of range, but they quickly discovered their mistake as they fell to a right and left.

W.L.,
Midlothian.



The guns at the Kennel Club's Retriever Trials at Sutton Scotney (l. to r.): Mr. R. L. Newton, Lord Rank, Mr. F. O. G. Lloyd, Mr. M. Geikie, the Hon. Mrs. Cowen, and Major R. F. H. Cowen.

DISPUTE WITH LANDOWNERS

Sir,—Through your columns, we, the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Wildfowlers' Association, would like to inform your readers of a dispute affecting wildfowling in this area. For the past two to three years, we have had trouble with the landowners whose land borders the right-of-way to Wootton Marsh.

At various times during these years we have been faced with padlocked, iron gates across the paths, paths ploughed up, and members stopped by the landowners or their employees and told they were trespassing.

After a lot of hard work and letter writing by this Association all these disputes were settled and at no time have the paths been closed for any length of time.

These disputes have now come to a head with the landowners applying to the County Council for the removal of the right-of-ways from the map. This has been strongly opposed by this Association, the local angling association and the Wootton Parish Council, as a result of which there is to be a public enquiry on November 19, at 10.30 a.m. in the office of the Freebridge Council, King's Lynn.

This Association has engaged the services of a local solicitor, and appointed eight members who are well acquainted with the right-of-ways in question, to represent us at the enquiry.

If the landowners application is successful, it will mean the virtual closing of the marshes on the east side of the Wash, and the end of wildfowling in this area.

G. APPLETON (Hon. Secretary),
30 Losinga Road, King's Lynn.

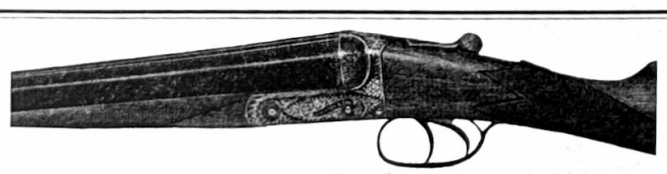
THE VAGARY OF PARTRIDGES

Sir,—This is a story of two Saturdays on our marshes, October 19 and 26. We yere a party of five guns on both occasions. We did the same fields in exactly the same way on both days. On the first day, October 19, the first field we walked was a large stubble field bordered by a dyke which held four nice coveys averaging 12 birds in each—No. 1 gun missed both the first and failed to fire at the fourth as he thought it was too near the road. The third, a covey of 15, let us walk within two yards of the end of the field and then burst *through us.* Being on the outside I was the only safe gun able to fire and I shot one and brought down a second, which we could not find.

No. 2 gun firing at a hare and shouting at his dog to bring it from the other side of the dyke put up two pairs of mallard—one pair he had walked past! The other pair being some 60 yards ahead. He was very annoyed as we very seldom see duck on our marsh. (Incidentally I waited there that evening and the four came back to feed in the barley stubble; I missed with the right but brought down a drake with the left.)

Our next field was a long stretch of tall grass where we knew two coveys were every day—but today they were on the edge on the plough and saw us before we saw them and they went off our ground. I killed a hare in this grass. We then did a nice piece of stubble and found two coveys which got up at our feet. No. 2 gun got one and No. 4 gun missed them clean. Another hare was shot here and our last beat was some potatoes where two coveys again got up close to the guns but only one bird was shot. I missed my covey! We must have seen quite 10 nice coveys which lay so well except the two coveys which we did not fire at and our bag should easily have been five brace instead of one and a half.

On October 26, we again did the same fields in the same way and again saw 10 coveys; four in the first stubble got up 200 yards ahead of us; we drove two back over the road—one I saw too late, and the other



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turned back, just as it was about to cross the road owing to a large sheep lorry passing at just the wrong moment.

The grass held one small covey of seven which got up wild. Not a bird was in the stubble nor the potatoes but five coveys were out on the just ploughed field—terribly heavy stuff. They would not let us get within 200 yards of them, except on two occasions when No. 1 and 2 guns were getting over some barbed wire and they got up in range and again while No. 1 gun was falling over the rough plough and was only able to get one barrel off shot one! Bag for five guns, one partridge, one cock pheasant, which must have lost its way and stayed in the marsh overnight! and two hares. Birds were terribly wild and it was quite a nice calm day. On the first day all the birds were getting up in easy range some under our feet and on the second they would not let the guns get within 200 yards of them.

I have often found this happen and I suppose weather conditions are the cause of it—it is *not* because they have been fired at, because perhaps next Saturday they will sit tight again and if one covey sits they all do.

F. A. C. MUNNS,
The Paddock, Etchinghill.

MAGNUM OR GAME GUN?

Sir,—Mr. Tomlinson's arguments do not even stand up in theory. If (in round figures) you use 1oz. of No. 6 in your 2½in. 12-bore, you would expect pattern and penetration to fizzle out together at about 40 yards (in *round* figures). Now suppose you use 1¼oz. of No. 6 (the magnum load), you would expect the same pattern at 50 per cent greater range (i.e. 60 yards) but what about your penetration? Obviously you must change over to a larger shot size thus "robbing Peter to pay Paul." Then how on earth could a magnum carry to 70 yards?

It is my well considered opinion (I invite criticism) that you *double* your shot charge, you increase your effective range by only 50 per cent, while if you increase your shot charge by 50 per cent, you increase the range by only 25 per cent.

If a good shot is able to kill duck consistently with his 2½in. 12-bore at 40 yards, then Mr. Tomlinson should be able to do as well with his magnum at 50 yards. But 70 yards is absurd.

This is not to say I do not favour the 1¼oz. load for wildfowl and pigeon. I am inclined to favour it very much. But it is not all that better. The Americans are now loading it into a 2¾in. case, so we could easily do the same. The 2¾in. (or semi-magnum) is practically standard in the Colonies, Dominions, and America. I suggest it is the best and most versatile gun over here for those whose shooting is mainly wildfowl, pigeon, and rough shooting (in that order). These guns should weigh about 7½lb.

People think this a severe handicap for game shooting. I am becoming convinced that it is not. It is only that the 6½lb. gun is more pleasant to use on game and snipe. But once train yourself to the extra weight and heavier charge and "see how the birds come down!"

Angling readers will understand me if I say that a 6½oz. rod is more pleasant to use on trout. But, who can doubt that a 7½oz. rod in practised hands would land as many—and possibly more?

E. MUSPRATT,
Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

Sir,—On this question of magnum or game gun, I would join issue with Mr. Tomlinson on one or two points. I agree that a magnum 12 is a very nice gun to have, and if almost all your shooting is wildfowling, a sensible gun to have. Also I agree that the smaller bores, 20, 28 and .410 are not really satisfactory weapons for the general ruck of wildfowling, as far as duck and geese are concerned. Snipe and so on, are, of course, a different matter.

Where I do disagree with him is in his statement that you cannot persuade duck to fly within 40 or 45 yards of where you wait. It is not suggested that in his experience this is not true; I am sure if he says it that it is. My point is that in my experience his experience is exceptional.

My brother-in-law and I shoot duck and geese in the south of Ireland. He shoots a lot every season and is a good shot. I shoot irregularly with him and am about an average shot. We both use game guns and find they do everything we want. Last time we met we discussed this question of magnums, and concluded that the extra shots it would enable us to take would be just about balanced by those close ones it would prohibit us from taking. In failing light and certain geographical conditions the close shot may not be any more infrequent than the long shot.

My view, therefore, before recommending any youngster to purchase a magnum or a game gun would be to seek information as to what he proposed to shoot and the ranges at which he would have to shoot it. There is no point in encumbering yourself with the extra weight of a magnum, which is a specialist long-range weapon, if your wildfowling is of the kind that does not call for such a weapon. This is commonsense, not laziness.

R.F.W.,
Eire.

Sir,—I should like, if you will allow me, to have a crack at Mr. Tomlinson who wrote under the above heading in the issue for November 1. I, personally, think that he and far too many of the so-called fowlers and shooting men of today, spend too much time with gun books and well written selling lists. From what I read, the southern counties of these isles seem rather overcrowded with gunners if an old wildfowler even has to disguise his flighting spots.

However—Mr. Tomlinson, may I suggest to you that the sport of wildfowling together with any form of shooting, is a sport, namely because it calls upon skill to achieve its objects—one cannot call using guns that fire at extreme ranges a skill! No doubt our very fine gunsmiths if they wished, could design guns capable of killing at even greater ranges, but the answer as to why they do not, is, I should think, obvious.

I do not address the following remarks to Mr. Tomlinson in particular; for all I know he may be a very experienced wildfowler. But I do address them to the novice or beginner. Forget all about gun knowledge, when you buy a gun. Go to the man whose trade it is, he will tell you what gun to use. If you are genuinely interested in the machinery of a gun, then by all means study it, but remember it is but a tool, and a good tool is only good when it is in the hands of a craftsman.

Do study your quarry! Whether it be fur or feather, we cannot, and never will, know too much about them. Fieldcraft can give the extra few yards that you think necessary to the range of a gun. Finally, remember no matter how far a gun will shoot, the birds sometimes will fly just those few tantalising yards further, and when they do, and it happens to all of us, just accept it as part of a sport and part of a skill that man's mind and machinery cannot beat.

FOWLER,
Coventry.

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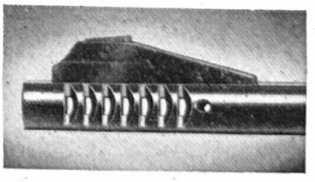

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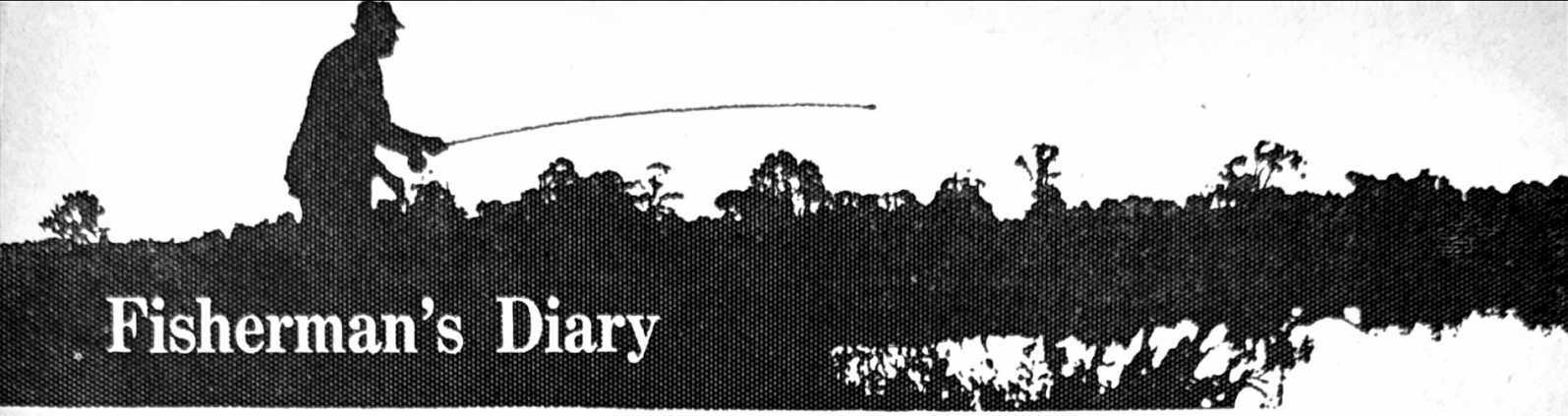


Fisherman's Diary

by Coridon

THE only grayling of which I know within 50 miles of my home were put into a river a couple of years ago by the local angling society, and anglers are still asked not to fish deliberately for them and to replace any accidentally caught.

I must admit that I miss my grayling fishing. I could, of course, take a holiday and go to some river where the fish are plentiful but my spare time is not unlimited and any time taken now would mean less later on. November and December are poor months for extended holidays in distant waters, and I find it better to use odd days and weekends at nearby sea and coarse fishing stations.

I learned my fly fishing on a little German river which gave a name to the village of Untereschbach, which in translation means Under the Grayling Stream. And a grayling stream it was! There were a few small trout, and some chub in the deeper pools, but the predominant fish were grayling, and they rose freely to fly.

Even my early fumbling efforts with the dry fly did not entirely frighten them, and I always seemed to catch an encouraging bag, though the excellent angler who was my mentor at that time naturally did better.

They were a very good strain of fish, too, for the river had many of the characteristics of a limestone one and food was plentiful. I forget exact figures, but two-pounders were not uncommon and I remember that we put back everything of less than about three-quarters of a pound. My friend and I watched a real monster for several minutes on one occasion as, with head almost out of the water, it pursued and kept gulping at a damaged fingerling fish which could, apparently, swim only on the surface, though it managed to evade its inexpert pursuer and reach the shelter of the weeds.

Those grayling were good risers to dry fly. My companion was a purist in that art, and even now I always use a dry fly for grayling when the nature of the water gives the slightest excuse for that approach.

I am by no means a purist and I have used other lures to catch grayling on scores of occasions, including that queerly-named object, the artificial grasshopper—but I get a real thrill watching the rise of a grayling from deep down, and from studying how accurately the fish works out problems of speed, distance and depth so that it arrives at the surface just when the current drifts the fly to the same spot.

Game or Coarse?

Three or four years ago I spent a week pike fishing on Lake Bala, having good general sport but catching no outstanding specimen. I went at the end of the trout season (to remove any temptation to change my quarry), and I learned that right through the summer pike and perch had been netted from the lake in an attempt to improve the trout fishing. I gathered that most of the fish were destroyed, but there was a hush-hush atmosphere over the whole operation.

I am not a Welshman and it may be years before I fish at Bala again, so it is not my business. I could not help thinking, however, that it was mistaken policy. In all such cases it is questionable whether the desired object will be achieved, and the right answer depends on factors that differ with every different water. I am now concerned only with the reasons lying behind the policy.

In England, trout fishing is scarce and coarse fishing plentiful, and a policy of maintaining a good head of trout in still waters and suppressing the coarse fish is usually an economically sound one. The situation is entirely different in Wales. Trout predominate and coarse fish are scarce. Lake Bala offers excellent pike and perch fishing which, properly exploited, could pay as well as trout fishing.

I mention this matter because the same sort of thing seems to be happening in Ireland. Many Irish lakes have, quite rightly, been cleared of immature perch and too numerous pike in order to encourage trout colonies, but there are waters that do not lend themselves to this treatment and which it is foolish to spoil.

After many years of propaganda, Irish coarse fishing has been "put across," and English coarse fish anglers are now an important part of Ireland's tourist economy. One of the big attractions is the River Shannon and Lough Derg—the latter a long and deep lough through which the Shannon flows, and in which (of my own knowledge) coarse fishing is well above average.

The Irish Electricity Supply Board has apparently held the fishing rights since the Shannon hydro-electric plant was built some thirty years ago. It apparently now plans to remove some of the Lough Derg's coarse fish in order to improve the game fishing, but in this instance there is organised opposition. Local angling clubs are supported in their objections by hotel proprietors and others who benefit from the English coarse fish anglers who come to the area in numbers that increase with every season.

Frozen Lakes

If a scheme for the artificial freezing of some of Scotland's small lochs for skating purposes came from an individual or an untried organisation, most people would laugh it off.

You can't laugh off the Scottish Council for Physical Recreation, for it has too excellent a record to be taken lightly. Sailing, fishing, pony trekking and gliding are among its established and permanent successes, but skiing is not far behind these in popularity. It is not behind them at all in success of achievement, yet there were many who scoffed when the idea was mooted.

Soon we may be able to skate on artificially frozen lakes. Chair lifts are suggested to open up the high points of the highlands. There is even a suggestion that mountain-top restaurants may be established. I am the last to support a garish display on every Scottish hilltop, and I condemn the suggestion in principle, but like Jerome's characters on the bummel there have been many occasions when I would willingly have sacrificed aesthetic principles for a well-found pub.

The chair lifts open up possibilities to anglers. Some of the best-stocked lochs are the most inaccessible. It was only two years ago that I climbed some 2,000ft. to a reputedly excellent loch. I saw it 400ft. below me in its quiet retreat and realised at the same time that if I was to get down the slope I had just climbed while the fading daylight lasted, I should have to return at once. I did.

A chair lift would have given me more than a glance at the loch—but in those circumstances how long would such lochs hold trout of more than average weight?

Record Ulster Salmon

Northern Ireland has a wealth of game fishing waters which include those inhabited by the famous dollaghan trout. It attracts more anglers from Great Britain every year, and its propaganda for the 1958 season has been reinforced by the capture of a 44lb. salmon in the River Maine a fortnight before the 1957 season closed on October 31.

A 44lb. salmon is a first-class fish by any standards, and I believe it is the heaviest so far recorded from Ulster waters. It was taken, I understand, in "free water," i.e. water which can be fished by anyone in possession of a statutory salmon licence. The lure was a golden sprat.

The salmon was a male fish which had spent about 3½ years feeding on the rich provender of the sea.

Shark Fishing

Looe anglers and some of that town's progressive boatmen did a first-class job in establishing and making popular the sport of shark angling. Between them they found the sharks, worked out successful methods of angling for them, and devised craft specially adapted to the sport. The Shark Angling Club of Great Britain was inaugurated, and its headquarters are naturally at Looe.

For several years Looe held (and still holds) its supremacy, but, as with all successful ventures, there is growing competition. It was soon realised that although the boats operated from Looe the sharks were normally caught ten or twelve miles out to sea, often off points of the Devon or Cornish coasts nearer than Looe itself. Several towns are now interested, Salcombe and Fowey to mention only two, and it will not be long before they offer shark-angling facilities.

Pollack and Ling

The concentration of sharks in south-western waters is due to concentrations of the fish on which they prey. These food fish fatten a good many other predacious species, and two outstanding Cornish catches of which I read today are a 17½lb. pollack and a 35lb. ling. The first can be measured against a record of 23½lb., established this year; and the second against 45lb., a record set up in 1912.

With His Coat So Grey

by Dan Russell

HAD it not been for John Woodcock Graves the name of John Peel would not be remembered today; but because Graves fitted some verses about his friend to an old Border tune, Peel is the most widely known name in hunting history. But, though the song is famous, few people know anything about the man who inspired it.

John Peel was born at Caldbeck in Cumberland on November 13, 1776, and he lived for the greater part of his life at Uldale, near his birthplace. He was a big man, standing six feet one inch in his stockings, and was a typical specimen of the old English yeoman farmer. His besetting passion was hunting and all through his long life he kept hounds. His pack would certainly not have suited the Shires for he kept but some twelve couple which he hunted and whipped in himself until his son, John, was old enough to help.

Peel's hounds were not a level lot, but they were real good ones to work, although that work was not always conventional for their Master boasted that they would hunt anything from a rabbit to a sheep. They hunted hares but Peel used them mostly for the chase of the foxes which caused havoc among the hill sheep. When the quarry was fox Peel's pack was augmented by every nondescript dog in the neighbourhood, for the fox was regarded as vermin to be slain without nicety.

So keen was Peel upon hunting that no sacrifice was too great to pay the expenses of his little pack. Whenever he was short of money he would sell a bit of land, so that after a time his patrimony shrank to very small proportions. Fortunately for him his wife had property at Ruthwaite and there he passed the latter part of his life after being compelled to let the house at Caldbeck. There is a story that on one occasion his financial position had reached the lowest ebb and the sportsmen of Cumberland called a meeting. Peel was invited and was presented with a purse containing enough money to pay his debts. Before parting the company gathered round the old man and sang "D'ye ken John Peel."

The Man Himself

His close friend Graves has left a pen picture of him. "He was a man of very limited education beyond hunting, but no wile of fox or hare could escape his scrutiny. Business of any shape was utterly neglected, often to a cost far beyond the first loss. An excellent rider, I have seen him once on a moor put up a fresh hare, and ride till he caught her with his whip. He was generous and true-hearted and, indeed, a better heart never throbbed in a human breast."

Graves has also left an account of how the famous song was composed: "Nearly forty years have passed since John Peel and I sat in a snug parlour at Caldbeck among the Cumbrian mountains. We were then both in the heyday of manhood, and hunters of the older fashion, meeting the night before to arrange the earth-stopping, and in the morning to take the best part of the hunt, the drag over the mountains in the mist, while fashionable hunters lay still in their blankets.

"We sat by the fireside, hunting over again many a good run, and recalling the feats of each particular hound, or narrow, breakneck escapes, when a flaxen-haired daughter of mine came in saying, 'Father, what do you say to what Grannie sings?' Grannie was singing to sleep my eldest son with an old rant called Bonnie Annie. The pen and ink for hunting appointments being on the table, the idea of writing a song to the old air forced itself upon me, and thus was produced impromptu, 'D'ye ken John Peel with his coat so grey?' Immediately after, I sang it to poor Peel, who smiled through a stream of tears which ran down his manly cheeks; and I well remember saying to him in a joking style, 'By jove, Peel, you'll be sung when we're both run to earth'." But even Graves could not have realised how true his prophecy was to become.

Peel's strong and independent character is shown in the way he got married. At an early age he fell in love with the daughter of a neighbouring farmer and put up the banns. When they were read in church, the girl's mother rose and objected on the ground that they were too young. The young couple lay low and appeared to fall in with their parents' wishes; but one night John took the stoutest horse from his father's stables and with his fiancee riding pillion set out for Gretna Green, where they married. There was a row when they got back but the parents knew they were beaten so the young couple were married over again by Parson Lynn in Caldbeck church. Unlike many hasty marriages, Peel's was a happy one and he became the father of thirteen children, the eldest of whom, John junior, became as keen a hunting man as his father.

John Peel.

Hunting to the Last

Peel lived to be seventy-nine and hunted up to the end. He was seemingly strong and vigorous on his last day with hounds and his death was sudden and unexpected. His daughter gave the following account of the end of his life: "He had been at a hunt on the Bassenthwaite side and came home late. He was on the dun pony, I remember, when he rode to the door. My mother and I were sitting up. He said he did not feel well: he could take no supper and went to bed. He could not rest, however, and got up again before morning. He grew worse and died in about a week."

It was on his birthday, November 13, 1854, that John Peel died. They buried him under the trees in the little churchyard at Caldbeck and all the county came to his funeral. His pack of hounds was bought by Mr. Crozier, Master of the Blencathra Hunt. His son, young John, lived to be ninety and was as keen a hunting man as his father, though there was no John Woodcock Graves to sing his fame.

John Peel has been dead for 103 years, but his name lives on in the most famous hunting song ever written.

West Sussex Game Shooting Association

EARLY this year it was suggested that an association of all those interested in game shooting in West Sussex should be formed, the object being to promote and protect the interests of the sport. In these days game shooters as individuals have to deal with organisations representing the anti-blood sports people, county rating authorities and even poachers, and it was felt that only by forming their own organisation could they speak and act from strength in reply.

In March a meeting was called at the Richmond Arms Hotel at Goodwood, under the chairmanship of His Grace the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, when about 90 people attended. The idea of an association was approved and a voluntary committee of seven of those present was asked to go into details and report back.

A further meeting was held on October 20 when those present (about 60), approved the rules and confirmed the members of the committee. The Duke of Richmond and Gordon has kindly agreed to be president.

The committee and officers are as follows: President, His Grace the Duke of Richmond and Gordon; chairman, Colonel G. Phipps Hornby; treasurer, Colonel P. M. G. Anley; secretary, Captain K. F. E. Woods; members, Messrs. L. Drewitt, L. T. Hawkins, N. Gray, F. G. Standfield and R. P. Wilson.

The rules approved at the meeting are as follows:

Title: The West Sussex Game Shooting Association.

Objects: (1) To protect and further the interests of game shooting in West Sussex; (2) To promote and assist in the destruction of vermin; (3) To prevent poaching; (4) To endeavour to obtain favourable trade facilities for members; (5) To do everything possible to further the above objects.

Members: Membership is open to all persons interested in the above objects, subject to approval by the committee. Each member shall be entitled to attend and vote at any general meeting of the Association.

Election of new members: Any person desirous of becoming a member of the Association, must send in an application to that effect, complete with his name and address to the secretary. The election of such candidates for membership shall rest with the committee.

Subscription: The annual subscription shall be 10s., payable on February 1.

Management: The affairs of the Association shall be managed by a committee, not exceeding seven persons, and a secretary, all to be elected at the annual general meeting. The committee shall have power to co-opt up to two other non-voting members.

President: There shall be a president.

Quorum: At any general meeting of the Association, 10 per cent of the total membership shall form a quorum.

Special general meeting: It shall be incumbent on the secretary to call a special general meeting of the Association within fourteen days of the receipt of a requisition in writing signed by ten members.

Alteration of rules: These rules shall be altered only at a special meeting of the Association, or at a general meeting of the Association, provided that fourteen days, previous notice in writing has been given to the secretary.

Latest membership figures, 101.

Anyone interested in membership should write to: Captain K. F. E. Woods, Estate Office, Goodwood, Chichester.

FINE SETTINGS ON A CRUDE SIGHT

by Neave Parker

BOTH my automatic pistols are equipped with sights that use an up-and-down movement of the foresight as a means of changing the "elevation." The rear sights take care of the windage. Each foresight consists of a blade of metal set in a slot and secured by a locking-screw. The bottom of each foresight is rounded laterally and rides on the bottom of the slot which is cut to fit (See fig. 1). The locking-screw binds into an arc-shaped groove on the side of the blade. Each foresight is reversible giving an undercut sight for slow fire and a forward sloping surface for use against dark backgrounds, as in the Rapid Fire Silhouette matches.

The trouble with this type of sight and adjustment is that there is no fine control over the movement of the sight, and should the locking-screw loosen, the amount of shift cannot be determined and the sight must be reset by a long process of trial-and-error; a very tedious state of affairs.

The remedy is simple in the extreme. When the sight has been set to the shooter's satisfaction for a particular distance, scribe a line along the side of the sight close to the sight-mount (see fig. 2). It is then very easy to see any deviation, should the sight be moved, on account of the lack of parallelism between the scribed line and the mount (fig. 3). Also the elevation may be altered to very fine limits by observing the slant of this scribed "datum-line." A similar line on the other side of the blade can be scribed to cope with yet another distance, or to be used for a different target. I have more than one blade, one is so marked for decimal and metric targets at 20 yards, and another for 50 metres when the "undercut" end faces the shooter. Its rear-sloping face has been filed to present a yet more acute angle to the line of fire, and when the blade is reversed this face picks up the light for use against dark targets. This latter sight is designed for use at meetings of the British Pistol Club in the Free Pistol and Silhouette events.

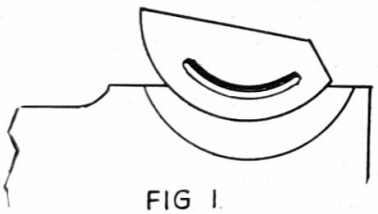


FIG 1.

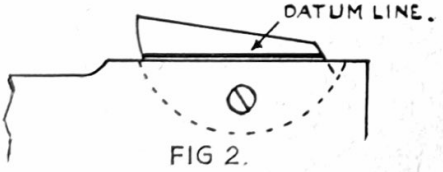


FIG 2.

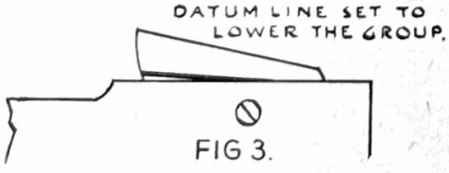


FIG 3.

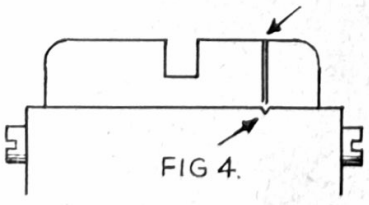


FIG 4.

Care must be taken to preserve the top edge of the rear sight blade from damage in order to ensure that the "datum-line" on the foresight remains a correct reference for the vertical positioning of groups on the target. Should a file be used in the rear sight to correct elevation this must be done for one distance or target only, all further sightings must be made by movement of the foresight blades only.

I have been spared much exasperation since I devised this simple method of sight-setting.

As to windage, the rear sight blade has a short vertical line scribed on its rear face to correspond with a mark on its mount (fig. 4).

As a test, recently I fired on alternate decimal and metric targets using my number one foresight. The average on the decimals was 94, and on the metrics between 86 and 87. I was not displeased with my modest system.

Gun Gossip

by North Country

COMPARATIVELY few queries come my way about single-trigger guns. Whether the inference should be that this is due to the fact that comparatively few such guns are in use I wouldn't care to say. But since I grew up among single-triggers I am always interested in the subject, having a great respect for *first-class* guns of this design, whose users have generally been top-grade shots. I must confess though, I do not myself use such a mechanism, my preference being for the ordinary two-trigger type.

So I welcome a letter from a Lancashire reader (Major A. C. F. Whitby, M.C.) who is having a little difficulty with his gun. He writes thus: "I have just bought myself a second-hand best quality gun in perfect condition with a spare pair of full-choke barrels, which is something I have always wanted. I have had the gun fitted to my measurements and it fits me like a glove, but it has a single trigger, and for the life of me I can't get into the use of it. I am continually slipping back my hand and searching for the second trigger! I suppose that it is not surprising I am a bit set in my ways because I have been shooting with double trigger guns for the last twenty years. Before that, however, when I was living abroad, I shot for about ten years with an automatic with a single trigger, and in those days I found that if, say, I borrowed a friend's gun I could switch over from single to double trigger and back again from one day to the next without any trouble whatever. I am sure that I shall get into the way of the single trigger with time, but any hints you can give me to shorten this time will be greatly appreciated."

Snap Cap Practice

Naturally we are inclined to become a bit set in our ways as time goes on. Yet I have known a man who, having done a great deal of shooting since early boyhood, invested in a single-trigger when he was past fifty. This was his first experience of this mechanism. No doubt he had his growing pains, but he was soon at home with the new mechanism and doing very well. This does not exactly help Major Whitby. I would suggest in his case that he should practice as much as possible with a pair of snap caps in the gun. This can be done anywhere at any time. If he puts in a little practice, say, each evening, I feel sure he will soon be able to adjust himself to the different action. It is all a matter of practice. And practice in this way costs nothing.

Indeed more use might be made of snap caps for similar purposes. In the handling and aiming of guns for the purpose of practice it is always a good plan to be able to press a trigger whose lock is cocked rather than just to pull on an uncocked trigger. Used cartridge cases may be tried a time or two, but the caps are soon beaten in and offer no resistance to the strikers. It is not good for the strikers to be released into empty chambers. So it becomes necessary to use snap caps for such practice. Where indoor practice is desired—and such seems to be called for in the present case—this is the best way.

It is possible to get in a very quick second shot with a single trigger. More of these actions would be in general use, I am sure, were it possible to produce absolutely *reliable* mechanisms of the kind at a moderate price. My advice is to buy a single-trigger only in best quality work. Your locks then will not let you down and will last a lifetime (or more). A friend who uses a best gun thus fitted has nothing but praise for it. Yet the personal factor must be considered. Some persons just do not like single-triggers and prefer our old friend the double-trigger. These personal preferences should always be respected, more especially as good shots are usually men of great sensitivity. It is much the same in the case of barrel lengths.

My friend of the single-trigger has had trouble in the reverse order to Major Whitby. Circumstances made it necessary for him to go back to a double, temporarily, a few years ago. He did not get on at all well—at first. He would find himself pulling the same trigger twice, getting his finger mixed up in the triggers and generally tied up. To begin with he was most unhappy, particularly as he failed to kill his quota. Indeed he was only beginning to get into his stride again when he had his single back.

Forthcoming Field Trials

SECRETARIES OF FIELD TRIAL SOCIETIES ARE INVITED TO SEND US REPORTS OF THEIR TRIALS FOR PUBLICATION IN "THE SHOOTING TIMES." REPORTS SHOULD BE SENT DIRECT TO THE KENNEL EDITOR, MR. P. R. A. MOXON, HERNE COMMON, HERNE BAY, KENT.

Nov. 15 & 16: Labrador Retriever Club (Open Stakes). Idsworth, Horndean, Hants. Secretary, C. Brown, 19 Dulverton Road, New Eltham, S.E.9.

Nov. 15 & 16: North of Scotland Gundog Association (Spaniels). Secretary: W. Emslie, 58 Dee Street, Aberdeen.

Nov. 19: Kennel Club Puppy and Non-Winners Stake. Six Mile Bottom, near Newmarket. Judges: Miss E. A. S. Neale, Mr. D. F. Cock, Major K. J. Malcolm and Mr. R. G. Baldwin. Secretary: E. Holland Buckley, The Kennel Club, 1-4 Clarges Street, Piccadilly, London, W.1.

Nov. 20: Flat-Coated Retriever Society. Kinlet Park, Worcester. Judges: Mrs. A. Heywood Lonsdale, Mr. T. J. Greatorex, Mr. R. B. Weston Webb. Secretary: H. A. Wilson, The Hill, Moss Road, Lambeg, Co. Antrim, N. Ireland.

Nov. 21: United Retriever Club (Open Stake). Shifnal, Shrops. Secretary: W. Cass, Stonebridge, Woodchurch, Ashford, Kent.

Nov. 22 & 23: Spaniel Club. Secretary: T. J. Greatorex, Corndean, Hodnet, Shropshire.

Nov. 25: Southern and Western Counties Field Trial Society (Retrievers) (Puppy and Non-Winners Stake). Chilbolton Down, near Stockbridge. Judges: Mr. H. A. Saunders, Capt. W. A. Fellowes, Mr. R. E. Leach and Mr. K. Chudley. Secretary: R. F. H. Cowen, Sutton Manor Estate Office, Sutton Scotney, Winchester, Hants.

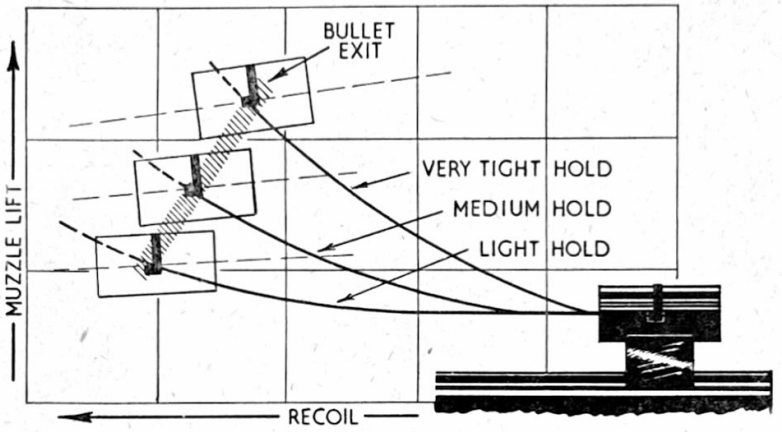
DROP IT

by W. H. Fuller

SEVERAL correspondents have been in touch with me since the photographic demonstration of a method of getting the butt into the shoulder without fuss or movement was published in these columns a few weeks ago. Their main concern appears to be getting information on two questions. The first — which is best, the single or the double-point sling; the second—which is right, to keep the rifle up in the shoulder for the full ten rounds or to drop it after every shot?

There is no doubt in my mind of the correct answers to both these questions. The theoretical considerations plainly denote "single-point" and "drop it." The practical angle is that almost every top level shooter throughout the world uses the single-point sling and they all drop the butt after every round. Further, the butt down technique is not in any way a necessity of the single-point method. They are not co-related in any way, one being a function of hold and the other one of rest.

In England the beginner is always introduced to the two-point sling, which in my opinion is wrong. It is not too easy to get into. Nor is it too easy to adjust. It inhibits a tendency to adopt a high firing position in order that the sling stays well up the arm. It pulls the rifle into the body from the right, cramps the shoulders and restricts breathing. It loads the left arm to such an extent that many of the small details of body position are masked. But, and this no doubt is why it is so popular with general club shooters, it holds or appears to hold the rifle more steadily. But actually this is not so whilst the rifle is firing although it can be immediately before and whilst aiming. And that is where I think many of the mistakes occur. The two-point sling holds the rifle into the body so tightly and firmly that other faults are hidden.



Sketch showing the effects of hold on muzzle lift. The very firm hold of the plain two-point sling and its various alternatives will produce the type of curves shown at the top of the diagram. The single-point sling used correctly will produce the lower curve where it will be seen that the rifle moves backwards for a considerable distance before it starts to rise and when it does so slowly, whereas the curves for the two-point sling start to rise very quickly, in fact, almost as soon as the gun fires.

Newton and All That

I am not being too kindergarten about this for it leads to several things which are really important. When the rifle is fired and the bullet starts to move forward the rifle starts to move backwards. This is not my own idea. That Newton man said it centuries ago. He also said lots of other things in connection with moving bodies, something about all actions having equal and opposite reactions, but as he expected us to do sums as well, we are not amused.

Almost immediately the butt meets with the resistance of the shoulder; Newton had quite a lot to say about this as well, and because the line of the travel of the bullet is well above the pressure point of the butt in the shoulder; the rifle pivots about the butt; the muzzle starts to lift. The rifle will continue to lift all the time the burning gas has sufficient expansion left in it to push on the bullet and the bolt face. The rifle will also continue to lift after the bullet has left the barrel due to its inertia collected during its forced uplift. Without bringing G.N. too much into this discussion it is important to note that the energy put into the rifle is identical with that put into the bullet, and no matter how hard the rifle is held that energy has to be accounted for.

Some of it goes in lifting the rifle against gravity and the balance of it goes in pushing the body or parts of it to the rear. If a very tight hold is used and the shoulder drawn back into the body as it is generally with the double-point sling, the butt will meet with resistance far sooner than it would have done if a less tight hold had been used. In consequence the rifle lifts earlier and the bullet is flipped higher. Providing, however, that exactly the same degree of hard hold is used for every shot, good scores can be maintained, but it is obvious that it is far more difficult to maintain a really hard hold than an easy or light one. The harder the hold the more difficult it must be to maintain constancy. A less tight hold enables the bullet to get much further up the barrel before the barrel starts to lift. If there is any doubt about this just take a look at two marksmen shooting side by side on the firing point using the same type of rifle, the same ammunition, one using a two-point sling and the other a single-point. The kick of the former is quite obvious and if you align yourself behind him and watch his foresight you can gauge for yourself how high it does kick. The movement is exceptionally fast and the actual height to which the foresight jumps may be twice or three times the amount it appears to rise to. But if the single-point is being correctly used and shot you will immediately note how much less the foresight rises; in fact you may not be able to see it rise at all.

But if you now go to the side of the shooters and observe the rearwards movements of their butts it will be quite obvious how much deeper will be the true rearwards movement of the butt of the single-point; in fact it will often appear simply to slide back and then forward again as if it were in a machine guide. It will be quite obvious which sling should give the best shooting, providing other things remain equal.

Another Failing

The double-point sling has another feature; or failing would be a better word. It must be used very high up the arm and the arm needs to be at a high angle in order that the sling stays put. It is true that a button or a stop may be used to hold it up there, but if such a device is used the only net result is to drag the coat sleeve down and one is no better off than before. Being cocked up as it were the recoil will kick the shoulder back instead of absorbing the punch, such as it is, if a lower shoulder position were adopted. If the shoulder is punched back, even though the actual movement may appear to be small, it means that the body too must be subjected to some displacement. If this displacement occurs after the bullet is out of the barrel it will not matter, but if it occurs whilst the bullet is still in the barrel and the displacements are not equal every time the rifle is fired, then the shooter has a reason for erratic scores.

Heave and Fidget

I have spent much of my time during the past few years looking at people shooting, and I have always noticed that the double-point sling users have to heave themselves back into position far more often than do the single-point adherents. They appear to have to fidget more to get going and often have trouble in getting comfortable, if they ever do, when they are on a tight firing point, one in which the shooters are really crowded together.

Small-bore shooters brought up on the double-point sling often have difficulty in getting used to the single-point and this is no real wonder. The technique is so different. The body seems to be quite free and until the left arm is got well under the stock the rifle simply arcs over the left elbow. It will be found that the body direction needs to be more in line with the sight line, that is the right shoulder wants to be more behind the rifle. The rifleman gets more behind the gun and the right shoulder is free to be moved forward to meet the pressure of the butt. I think that most of the recoil of the single-point sling position is lost in the ability of the right shoulder to move back easily without disturbing the whole of the body. It certainly appears to be so when I have been watching others. The right hand appears to be more effective and the thumb and finger technique of the double-point sling is hardly possible. The right hand should grip the small and not just rest there as is possible with the double-point. Trigger control has to be far more accurate and the position of the head on the stock maintained identically for each shot.

These are some of the things which I mentioned earlier as being masked by the harder hold of the two-point sling. The beginner can be taught these things from the start but the old hand used to the double-point will have the double job of unlearning and then learning again. The main point about the single-point sling technique is that a lower firing position is possible without danger of the sling sliding down the arm, and it is quite possible that the older hand, being used to the more upright position and the feel of the sling well up the arm, has some difficulty in appreciating that a well buckled arm band will not slip down, even if it is mounted only half-way up the arm. Theoretically correct or incorrect, my arm band is around the bulge of the muscle and not above it, where I find it is likely to cause restriction.

Every time a shot is fired, whether the single or two-point is in use, the body must move slightly. The trunk may not move, but it is almost certain that the right elbow in particular does so. It is also quite certain that in loading the rifle the right elbow will roll, and however carefully this operation is carried out it will not take up exactly the same position for the present shot as it did for the previous shot. For this reason alone, I think that the butt should be dropped and the whole position reset.

But as I have pointed out often before, the

butt-down technique is essential if the marksman is not to tire himself out. To attempt to hold one steady position for ten shots, a matter perhaps of seven full minutes or even more when one is shooting in one's club, is, on the face of it, a rather ludicrous undertaking. To the onlooker, small-bore prone shooting may appear to be a nice easy pastime. A beginner needs only to fire ten shots at a card to know that this is a complete fallacy. Laying out in the sun on the beach on one's tummy without much on is an entirely different thing to lying trussed up in padded clothes and holding up a fifteen-pound lump of wood and metal and then trying to keep it steady to within a minute or less of angle.

Think again! You know what happens when you follow the flight of a bird overhead or keep tabs on a very high flying aircraft. Before long you are giddy and when you put your head down again you can feel the blood pulse round it. The head in the prone position is not very much different to watching anything overhead. The blood flow is restricted, and if restricted long enough will affect the eye-sight. It does not take very long for this to happen to the ordinary person. Therefore, I think that keeping the butt up not only unnecessarily tires the arms and the body, but also affects the eye-sight. Every opportunity of resting should be taken so that every part of the body affected is fully able to do what it has to do when it is supposed to be able to do it. And the only time when that really matters is when the rifle is in the aim and the trigger is about to be squeezed. At all other times everything should be rested, and that can only be done by putting the butt down after every shot.

The main argument about the butt down position put forward by those who have not had the patience to adopt and master it, is that the constant movement can only upset one's position. That this is not so was amply proved by the photographs which I mentioned earlier. Or can I put it another way? Think back as long as you like and try to remember how many of your first shots on a card were not a bull. Not very many. If you are candid most of your lost shots went from number four onwards. Looking at my own members' cards, most of them were dropped at the fourth and eighth shots, but definitely not the first. So why not make every shot your first? I think the reason why they dropped those particular shots is because they will persist in staying up. The first shot goes in and they feel satisfied that they have everything taped. The second shot is fired, and it is not quite so good. They still stay glued and the third shot goes in—just. Then they drop the fourth, slacken up a bit, check the sling on the arm and settle down again to scoring top marks for the next three shots, only to lose the fourth. In taking the right elbow off the mat in order to check the sling they have to all intents and purposes broken down. They would have done much better to have gone the whole hog and put the butt down as well.

Something Must Go

Every time the rifle fires something is sure to go. It may be the position of the left elbow, the sling, the right elbow, the position of the head on the stock, the cant of the rifle, the pressure of the left hand against the hand-stop, the position of the sling against the glove, the position of the hand inside the glove, any single thing can go, but it is far more likely that two or three or perhaps all of them go just that little bit in themselves, which is not noticed or appreciated, but all put together make a lot of difference. I do sincerely suggest to every shooter, whether he or she uses the single or the double-point sling, to take the rifle home and practice for half-an-hour on the comfort of the drawing room carpet, lifting the butt into the shoulder and putting it down again. Do not rush the sequence. Put a mark on the wall at the correct height to aim at. Put a watch near your right hand and make a lift and a drop at half-minute intervals. Keep in the aim for not more than about five seconds and then put the rifle down and have a rest. Within a month you will be wedded to the "drop-the-butt-every-time" technique and thereafter will wonder why you did not work at it before.

Wildfowling Clubs

The Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland: Hon. Secretary, Lt.-Commdr. J. W. Anderton, R.N.V.R., 19 Castle Street, Liverpool, 2.

HON. SECRETARY'S NOTES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the Executive Committee will be held at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham on Saturday, February 23, 1958 at 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

Sub. Committee and Club Secretaries are requested to forward points that they wish included in the Agenda and these should reach me not later than February 1, 1957.

Committee members will receive a copy of the Agenda not later than February 7, 1958.

Dated this 29th day of October, 1957.

J. W. ANDERTON, Hon. Secretary.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

It is with much regret that we are unable to produce a Christmas Card this year due to a lack of co-operation on the part of Christmas Card printers and pressure of work at present being experienced by your Publications Sub. Committee. However, an early start will be made to tie up this matter for Christmas 1958.

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Gundog News

Conducted by P. R. A. MOXON, Herne Common, Herne Bay, Kent

DISCUSSING spaniel work with a sportsman who considers that he is typical of my old friend "the average shooting man," it was interesting to hear his views upon basic requirements in the field.

"My dog," he said, "should be a good gamefinder and reasonably steady, but above all it should work well within range and at a pace which allows me to keep up with it. I do not want a super fast dog which tires itself out in an hour or two, but one which will keep going at a steady pace all day. I feel that the field trial spaniel may be all right if the handler is not shooting and can concentrate upon controlling and handling his dog. I like to be able to think about and concentrate upon my shooting, and the dog should be one which I can work in comfort. My complaint about trial dogs is that they are too fast, too keen and too highly sensitive for average shooting work."

There is little doubt that the very fast and keen spaniel is a handful and, for a man who expects to concentrate solely upon his shooting, not a particularly happy choice. However, for all this, one meets many men with just such dogs and which are a joy to shoot over. This is because they have been thoroughly trained and are properly handled, their owner finding as much (if not more) pleasure in the dog work as in the actual shooting. Such an owner has probably made a point of concentrating upon his dog during the early stages of field work, if not for the first season or two, and he is also likely to be a man who gets plenty of shooting.

By "plenty of shooting" I do not necessarily mean more than one day a week, but that day is always a good one. In the eastern counties and in other well-stocked "game" districts, the fortunate shooter may put up and shoot as much game in one afternoon as his less fortunately placed brother does in a month, or even a season. It stands to reason that a dog which gets the opportunity for finding, and having shot over it, a good head of game on each outing is going to become a better dog more quickly than the animal which is lucky to find two or three birds per afternoon.

Living on the Shoot

Not only this, but it must be remembered that some men live on or near their shoots, or at least conveniently close to game-holding ground where they can give their dog practice and exercise combined with training for short periods at odd times. The town dweller or the man who lives in a poor game area can probably only give his dog experience at weekends owing to the distance he must travel before reaching suitable country, and maybe even this experience is very limited if his ground is poorly stocked.

We must, therefore, face the fact that though the fast and stylish, keen and highly sensitive field trial type of spaniel is ideal for many men and always a joy to work when properly trained, there are numerous shooters who want something plainer and are quite prepared to put up with faults which, to the enthusiast, would be serious crimes. In my dealings with the shooting public over a good many years I have found that the average shooter wants a steady dog, one which will find him game and retrieve it, but that he is not particular about the finer points which, to the expert and enthusiasts, are most essential.

Three of the guns and handlers watch one of the dogs out on a retrieve, at the Golden Retriever Club of Scotland's trials at Cromlix.

He requires a dog which, above all, will not let him down and which he can control with the minimum of attention. On the other hand, he does not worry about pace, style or such things as sloppy retrieving, putting game down on the way in, slowness in picking up and I regret to say, a certain degree of hardness of mouth! Providing his spaniel works cover within gunshot—albeit slowly—does not chase into the next parish and comes when it is called, allowing him to get on with shooting undistracted, then he is content.

Finding a Right Type

The difficulty is always to find the right type of dog for a particular man and, conversely, the right type of man for a particular dog, which I consider to be most important. It is difficult to make a shooting man understand that the keen, working type of spaniel is much easier and quicker to train (and therefore cheaper, a most important point to many) than the other sort, and that performance is much more certain. I consider that the best dog for the average man I have described is still one of pure working strain, but which has proved perhaps too slow for trials and has had a very thorough training and one or two seasons work.

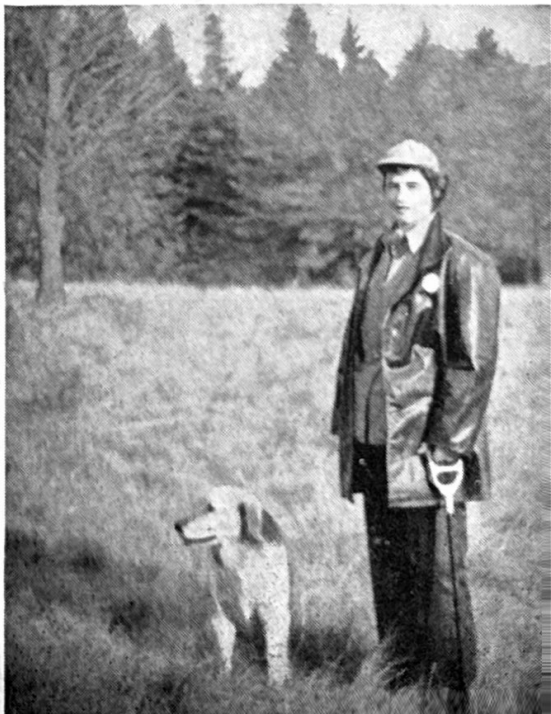
Unfortunately, there are not enough dogs of this type to go round. A shooting man who has such a paragon is likely to hold on to it, and the professional trainer or field trial kennel will probably have discarded it in its first season. Secondly, and by no means least important, a dog of this type is going to be quite expensive, not only because it is in great demand but because it has cost its owner quite a lot in training and keep.

So it all boils down to this. My average shooting man expects a suitable dog which will be obedient, steady and a good gamefinder, but he is either unable or unprepared to pay a good price for it. Furthermore, as he wishes to concentrate upon his shooting and "forget" his dog, he is unable or unprepared to spend much time on (a) getting it used to him and into his ways (b) practising it and furthering its education and control, which, if a young dog and not a very expensive one, it will obviously need. In other words, he is inclined to expect the impossible, and fails to appreciate the cost of feeding and training a dog in kennels, to say nothing of breeding and rearing the same puppy.

Another important point which is often overlooked by the shooting man with regard to spaniels is the temperament of the breed. A good spaniel is expected to face thick and thorny cover, in any weather conditions and for long periods. It probably has to cover six or seven miles of ground for every mile traversed by the shooter, and through much more difficult cover, and keep this up for several hours on end, often without the reward of finding much game or even scent.

In order to be able to perform this work a spaniel needs to be not only very healthy but of a keen, eager and restless temperament. A spaniel which is not keen to work is useless. I often say that if a spaniel was to stop and think about it, it would never face the sort of cover we expect it to work in unless it was a complete idiot. It must have that eager, restless "on the go" temperament in order to fulfill its proper function, and this is the main

Mrs. E. J. C. Lumsden with Treunair Treubhach, winner of the All-aged Stake at the Golden Retriever Club of Scotland's trials at Cromlix, Dunblane, on October 21 and 22.



reason why, generally speaking, a spaniel is not a suitable dog for driven game where it has to sit doing nothing for long spells. It is essentially a quester, a bustler and a cover dog.

Of course, there are degrees of eagerness. Some strains are more placid than others, and even members of the same litter vary to a surprising degree in this particular. There has been—thank goodness— a tendency of recent years to breed from the keenest and fastest workers (for which trials are largely responsible). There has also been, most unfortunately, the tendency to breed out of other strains most of the working instincts, for which the show people stand solely responsible.

So, as I have written above, we are left with the "in-between" dogs, those which have failed to make top trial grade by being too slow or possessing some other failing that would make them unsuitable for anything but shooting dogs pure and simple. The supply is not enough to satisfy the demand, and will never be so until the shooting man is prepared to pay a price for his dog which will reimburse the owner and trainer.

Before the last war, a well-trained dog could be bought for something like £20. Having regard to the rise in costs, and the fall in value of the £ sterling, the equivalent dog of today should cost between £60 and £80. Yet many men expect to buy or have trained a paragon for something between £25 and £30. Indeed, in many districts, shooting men expect to be able to lay their hands on useful workers for "round about £20!" These same men are paying (I will not say cheerfully) four times pre-war price for their cartridges, guns, shooting clothing and even their beer and cigarettes, yet still they expect to get a cheap dog.

I write of the "average man," let there be no mistake about this. There are plenty of shooters who know the value of a good dog and cheerfully pay it, often depriving themselves of something else in order to afford it. Neither do I wish the friend with whom I discussed this problem recently, and whose comments provoked this article, to think that I am "getting at" him or accusing him of being a "tight-wad," which I know is not the case. I am extremely grateful to him for setting forth so concisely the "average shooter's" requirements in a spaniel, and giving me the opportunity of pointing out the difficulties which lie in the way. To say nothing of my eternal gratitude to him for breeding the best, most lovable, fastest and keenest springer bitch that I have ever owned, or am ever likely to own, and whose desirable qualities are evident today in the third generation.

In Good Working Order

One final point, and probably the most important one of all. I do not consider that there is such a thing as a dog (of any breed) that can be "forgotten" in the shooting field. there are still countless shooters who believe that if they buy a trained dog, or have a puppy trained, then their responsibility ends there. In effect, they think "I have paid so much for an article and is should be perfect. All I have to do now is to use the article. It will eventually wear out, but its performance should remain consistent without effort or expense on my part.

However good a dog may be when you acquire it, without a certain amount of time and trouble on your part it will deteriorate sooner or later, probably sooner. If you buy a car you know you are going to have to service it and look after it in other ways. If it goes wrong you can take it to a garage for repair. Yet you buy a much more sensitive piece of "mechanism" when you take over a trained dog and one which, if it goes wrong through lack of attention on your part, may not be capable of "repair" by the best trainer in the world.

Every shooting man who has a trained dog, whether he be rich or poor, rough shooter, wildfowler or driven game specialist, must expect to devote a certain amount of time and attention to his dog. Not only must he feed and exercise it carefully (petrol and oil so to speak !), but he must learn how to "drive" it. He must give it regular "service" in order to keep it in good working order, by practising it in obedience and handling it carefully in the field.

Field Trials

The Southern and Western Counties Field Trial Society held an open stake for retrievers on October 21 and 22, at Brown Candover, near Alresford, when the judges were Messrs. D. M. Cock, R. Hill, A Wylie and Lt.-Col. E. Unwin.

Awards: 1, Miss K. Eason's labrador dog Tittenley Jimmy; 2, Mrs. J. R. Atkinson's golden retriever F.T. Ch. Mazurka of Wynford; 3, Mr. T. Lonsdale's labrador Templegrafton Jason (K. Chudley); 4 and best novice, Mr. and Mrs. Jude's labrador Gunners Faith (G. Williams): Reserve and best puppy, Mr. F. George's labrador Wilby Ballyduff Jimmie (J. Chudley). Four certificates of merit were awarded.

* * *

The Essex Field Trial Society held the first of its two Puppy and Non-winner stakes at Stoke-by-Nayland, by kind permission of Sir Charles C. Rowley, Bt. on Saturday, October 12, the judges being Messrs. A. J. Andrew, P. R. Hill, J. Lukies and Dr. J. Hurndall Gann. Chief Steward Mr. S. R. H. Little, used a Transhaler to call the dogs into the line. The weather was excellent and a steady supply of game was forthcoming for good guns and during the whole trial which was held in roots.

It was noticed that from the commencement until about noon there was no scent at all then a slight breeze got up and scenting conditions greatly improved and we saw some quite good dog work.

After lunch Mr. F. George's Wilby Ballyduff Jimmie handled by Mr. J. Chudley, put up a splendid performance after several dogs had failed on a running cock which must have greatly helped to settle the issue. A very good water test was provided by shooting a number of driven birds which fell into the lake, some of the dogs giving an excellent performance.

Awards: 1, Mr. F. George's Willey Ballyduff Jimmie (handler Mr. J. Chudley); 2, Mrs. Crawshay's Nazeing Mic (handler-owner); 3, Mr. R. S. Wilkin's Sendhurst Wink (handler Mr. R. G. Baldwin); Reserve, Mr. John Taylor's Johnlaw Pip (handler-owner). Certificates of merit: Mr. R. McL. Walker's Rivertrees Valdesco, Mrs. C. Raydene Hutton's Sidar of Yarlaw, Mr. O. J. M. Eley's Madford Yellow Penny, Mrs. M. C. Ridding's Bangerbrig Bly, Mr. G. R. Vinall's Stourcreek Rusty, Mr. Andrew Wylie's Pinehawk Legend, Mr. Vincent Routledge's Hallingbury Grouse.

* * *

The Essex Field Trial Society held the second of its two Puppy and Non-winner stakes at Spains Hall, Finchingfield, by kind invitation of our President, Lt.-Col. Sir John Ruggles Brice, Bart., O.B.E., T.D., D.L., J.P., and was judged by messrs. R. G. Baldwin, J. Lukies, Mrs. Crawshay and Captain J. McMullen. Mr. S. P. H. Little was Chief Steward and again used a Transhaler to call the dogs into the line. Our host had collected a first class team of guns and there was a nice steady supply of game.

Awards: 1, Mr. Vincent Routledge's Hallingbury Widgeon (handler-owner); 2, Dr. W. E. M. Berridge's Harpersbrook Honeydyke of Birdshill (handler Mr. K. Chudley); 3, Mr. and Mrs. Jude's Gunners Faith (handler Mr. G. A. Williams); Reserve, Mr. G. Tookev's Saltmarsh Velocity (handler-owner). Certificates of merit: Mr. E. G. Simpson's Newmarket Man (handler-owner), Mrs. F. Fairfax Rose's Hanlye Don (handler Mr. K. Chudley).

* * *

The English Springer Spaniel Club of Scotland held a successful trial at the Southwick, Kirkcudbrightshire, on October 15 and 16, when both stakes were won by the Breckonhill kennel. Mr. Curle's Breckonhill Borderange Bounce, handled by his owner won the Open Stake, and the kennel completed the double with Breckonhill Bridegroom in the Novice Stake. The judges were Mr. J. C. W. Simms and Mr. T. Lauder, and the awards were:

Open Stake: 1, Mr. G. Curle's Breckonhill Borderange Bounce; 2, Mr. J. Aldridge's Rinvington Starturn; 3, Mr. T. B. Laird's Griffel Snipe; Reserve, Mr. J. H. Windle's Jordieland Glean. Certificates of merit: Mr. Badenoch Nicolson's Denhead Mist, Mr. D. C. Hannah's Stokeley Higham Tonga, Mr. H. Jackson's Willy of Barnacre, Mr. Hannah's Stokeley Tinker, Mr. Jackson's Jill of Barnacre, Mrs. Thomson's Rivington Raechele, Mr. Madgwick's Breckonhill Brando, and Capt. E. W. Brook's Kinmount Patch.

Novice Stake: 1, Mr. G. Curle's Breckonhill Bridegroom; 2, Mr. Laird's Criffel Snipe; 3, Mr. Jackson's Jill of Barnacre; Reserve, Mr. Jackson's Willy of Barnacre. Certificates of merit: Mr. Hannah's Stokeley Speed, Mrs. Badenoch's Denhead Mist, Mrs. Jackson's Chanter's Moonshine, Mr. Windle's Jordieland Glean, and Mr. Thomson's Rivington Landgirl.

* * *

On October 17 it was back to retrievers at Strathallan Castle, Perthshire, where the Scottish Gundog Association held their two-day fixture. Mr. Jack Tait, of Yester, who has not done much trial work since he stopped handling Mr. McLaren's Pussy Willow, is back with a good dog of his own, Sheena's Mist. At the Labrador Club meeting "Mist" gained a certificate, and at Strathallan won the All-Aged Stake on a day when the standard of work was very high. It was also good to see that trial stalwart Mrs. Wormald back in the prize list, her Knaith Bandlad winning the Novice Stake.

Results—All-Aged Stake: 1, Mr. Jack Tait's Sheena's Mist; 2, Mr. P. M. Weatherby's Stockcross Kingcup; 3, Lord Rank's F.T. Ch. Hanlye Bobby; Reserve, Miss Helm's Brackenbank Stoneymiddleton Maid. Certificates: Mrs. Lumsden's Treunair Treubhach (golden), Miss L. Ross's Stubblesdown Vanda (golden), Mr. W. Meldrum's Blaircourt Jimmy.

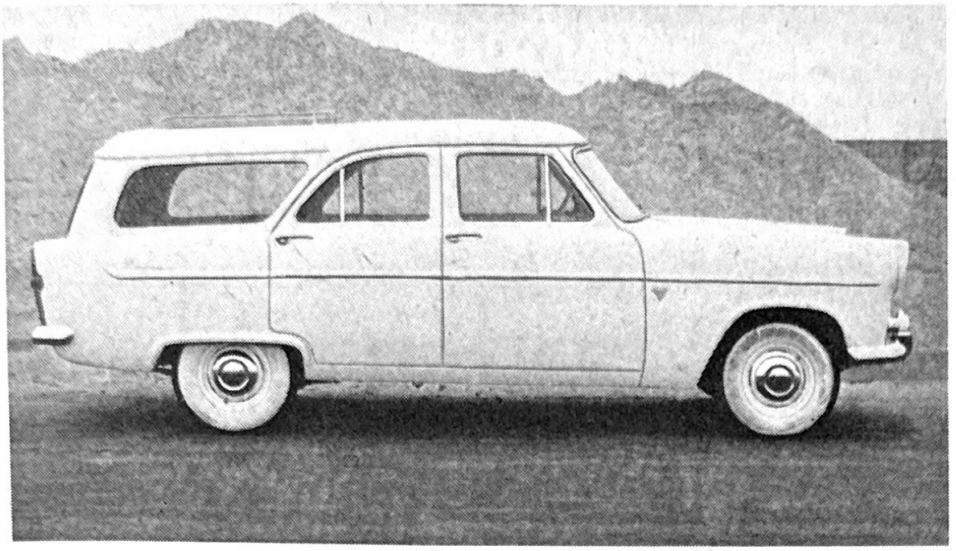
Novice Stake: 1, Mrs. A. Wormald's Knaith Bandlad; 2, Mrs. Harcourt-Wood's Glenfarg Brig; 3, Capt. Ramsay's Lossit Mirth; Reserve, Mr. D. Mackenzie's Staxigoe Scythe. Award of honour: Mr. Burton's Brackenbank Darwinian. Certificates of merit: Col. Kingsford-Lethbridge's Greadypark Cleaner, Mr. W. Meldrum's Blaircourt Jimmy. Judges were Lt. Col. E. H. M. Unwin, Mr. John Annand and Mr. W. Mackie.

* * *

The Golden Retriever Club of Scotland held their meeting at Cromlix on October 21 and 22. The meeting opened on the Monday with wet and stormy weather, and this seemed to affect the dogs as the work on the second day in the novice stake, when we were favoured with bright sunshine, was much better than in the all-aged stake.

In the Non winner stake, Mrs. Eccles' young bitch Haulstone Moth, handled by G. Orritt, was always going better than her rivals, and her retrieve of a strong-running cock pheasant, on which four dogs had failed clinched the matter. Second was Mr. N. B. Blossom's Sheila of Breydonvale, third Mrs. C. Hutton's Sidar of Yarlaw, and Reserve and certificate, Mr. G. Holmes' Maveen of the Wraes.

All-Aged Stake: 1, Mrs. E. J. C. Lumsden's Treunair Treubhach; 2, Miss Ross's Stubblesdown Vanda: 3, Mr. Fraser's Westhyde Minstrel; Reserve, Mrs. Hutton's Sider of Yarlaw.



It will go almost anywhere, and fast too.

The Ford Zephyr Estate Car

by Our Motoring Correspondent

I DO not want to rhapsodise about this motor-car because I consider that rhapsodies, in blue or any other colour, are nothing to do with trying to tell you what I think of a car.

In point of fact, the one I had for the week-end was green, though I am not sufficiently artistically minded to state what type of green it was, except that I liked it. Incidentally, it was the same car that was driven by a much more eminent correspondent than myself to Moscow and there stole the entire show.

This does not surprise me, since to drive it is, as near as possible, the most fool-proof and gratifying ride I have ever had.

With its 6 cylinder, 82.55 mm bore, 2,553cc engine, developing 85 b.h.p., you have so such power beneath your hands and feet, that you have to watch yourself to see that you do not lay yourself open to police interest without realising that you are in any way infringing the law.

I can only say that going up to Putney from my village on a Friday afternoon through the middle of Kingston (because I dislike the by-pass so much), I found myself at my destination in 29 minutes instead of the 40 or 45 I usually allow myself.

All this was after giving the car the most stringent caning on my local testing ground through which it came with flying colours. I am always more unkind to the four figure car (this is £1,100 plus) probably because I am never likely to possess one in this class.

In any case, over the roughest of country, pot-holes, ruts, long grass and tank-testing conditions this vehicle performed in a most admirable fashion and I defy any wildfowler or fisherman to find a venue which the Zephyr cannot reach with ease and comfort to the driver and passengers.

Real Luxury

With comfortable bench-type seats, wide enough for three both in front and behind or with folding arm rests in either, giving real luxury to four travellers, you have complete saloon car conditions with a roomy area for luggage or sporting equipment in the rear.

The driver's position and the facia facing him, being exactly the same as in the Zephyr or Zodiac saloon models, are almost too well-known to merit description. However, let it be said that they are complete and efficient with fingertip control of gears, indicators and horn, with lights and wiper switches immediately in front on the dashboard.

From an economy point of view, and after all, this is a major consideration to us all, the Zephyr is fortunate in that an overdrive is available at very little extra cost.

Having on frequent occasions stated that I am more or less ignorant of facts mechanical, I must here explain that I have gone to great pains to study this question of overdrive since it is obviously so important.

Reduced Revolutions

Briefly, overdrive reduces engine revolutions by 30 per cent on road speeds of over 32 m.p.h. In other words, when, in top gear, your car travels 100 miles at over 32 m.p.h. the engine revolves only for the equivalent of 70 miles. It is as simple as that, and the saving on petrol consumption and wear and tear on the engine is obviously in the same ratio.

At less than 30 m.p.h. normal transmission operates, and should you wish to accelerate suddenly from 40 m.p.h. upwards, a hard thrust on the accelerator operates a "kick-down" switch under the foot control and normal, fast acceleration is yours.

On the other hand, should you wish to brake on your engine on a steep hill or greasy surfaces, there is a hand switch below the instrument panel which throws you out of overdrive and into normal transmission.

Are there any discords in this otherwise euphonious Rhapsody ?

Yes ! And guilty of plagiarism, I quote the aforementioned "infinitely - more - eminent" correspondent when I say, "Where is the starting handle." This is not a remark directed at Fords, but all modern manufacturers who have dispensed light-heartedly with our "crooked splendour." What happens if miles from anywhere, in a blizzard, and with no one to push, the battery fails ? As far as that goes, how does one turn one's engine slowly to adjust points, short of jacking up the rear wheels and turning them in gear (a two man job) ? *N.B.* With good compression the fan belt will not turn the engine !

These are nightmares and could not happen to us, particularly if we owned a dream of a car like a Zephyr. I wish my dream could come true.

A Whiff of Brimstone

by Taproot

OUR county town has several features that awake in my breast the liveliest feelings of local patriotism. I admire its Georgian High Street with the occasional jutting gables of earlier architecture.

I like to think that one of its primmest porticos shelters my mouthpiece distilling legal wisdom behind his gig-lamp spectacles. I like the feeling that contemporary life is rather more deeply-rooted here than in most places. The county agricultural offices, one of our markets, and the assize court all lie within a small circle.

Nearly 400 years ago, at a time of religious persecution, over twenty citizens were burnt at the stake. Their memory, kept alive by several local societies is the reason behind annual torchlight processions and other demonstrations on November 5. Inevitably, the original pious intentions have become overlaid with other elements not altogether on the side of the angels. And here I find myself up against the difficulty of finding words for what psychologists call a subjective impression. However, I am far from alone in receiving it. The secret life, the other-side-of-the-moon aspect of our county town is known and cherished in every village for miles round. Thousands of country people come by train and bus every year to enjoy a whiff of brimstone. For, you see, there's a general loosening of inhibitions, more than a touch of diabolism in the flaring torches and horned head-dresses of the marchers. As a local bard put it:

Here, steeple-hatted, grim and high,
Wrapped in a raven shroud,
Rides Fawkes in dreadful majesty,
Borne by the drunken crowd,
Folk that half-worship, half-deride,
Nor know which truth to learn:
That . . . triumphing the martyrs died,
That . . . blood will always burn.

A good many young fellows and also some older persons, who in the words of Chesterton, "stretch the folly of their youth to be the shame of age," get clapped in the cooler for discharging fireworks in the street. I had a rather close shave myself some years ago when a friend and I affixed a slow-burning-rope bird-scarer to a traffic sign just outside the police station. This may sound rather silly, but this quiet backwater just off the High Street was so obviously out of the fun that we sought to ensure one cheerful bang at half-hour intervals throughout the evening. No doubt the authorities have a constable specially in ambush to anticipate such kind thoughts, because, although the place appeared deserted as we got the matches out, a huge figure materialised at our side in a quite uncanny way as we struck the first.

Now it always pays to be very polite to the police and when this constable accused us of letting off a firework my friend gently corrected him and explained that this was no firework at all, but a well-known proprietory brand of bird-scarer. With equal courtesy the constable enquired its purpose here. My friend explained that the jackdaws based on Castle Hill had so ravaged the pointing of the town's ancient brickwork that we feared for the safety of the police headquarters, especially on a night of such traditional lawlessness.

"A very public-spirited thought indeed, sir," said the constable, "but would you mind putting it out."

We were only too glad to comply with his request.

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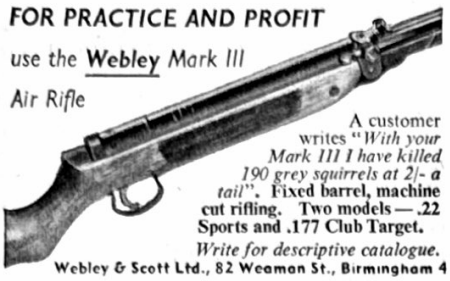

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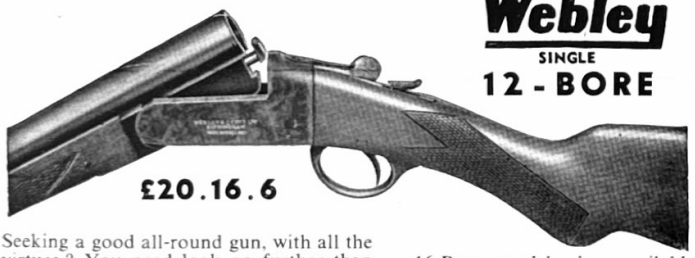

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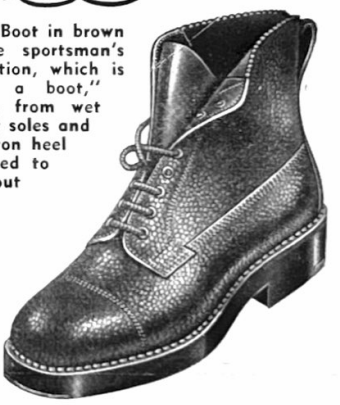

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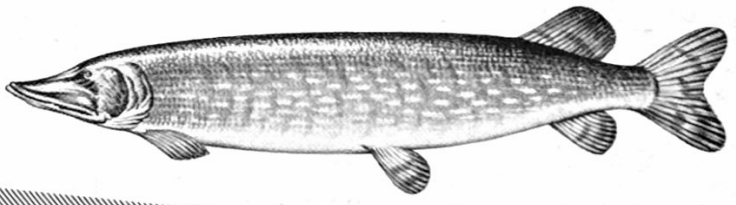

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